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## ABSTRACT

A TWO-PART CURRICULUM BULLETIN PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND WORKS OF DANTE ALIGHIERI DURING THE 700TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH. PART ONE INCLUDES HIS BIOGRAPHY, A DISCUSSION OF HIS MINOR WORKS, A SUMMARY OF "THE DIVINE COMEDY", DANTE'S IMPACT ON OTHER LANDS, AND DANTEAN THOUGHT. SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING A RESOURCE UNIT FOR ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADES ARE PROVIDED. OTHER LANGUAGE ARTS TOPICS ARE: (1) A GUIDED READING LESSON, (2) A COMPOSITION LESSON FOR VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT, (3) CHORAL SPEAKING, (4) POETRY APPRECIATION, AND (5) LITERATURE. MATERIALS RELATED TO DANTE IN SOCIAL STUDIES, MATHEMATICS, ASTRONOMY, MUSIC, THE DANCE, ART, AND GUIDANCE ARE OFFERED ALONG WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY. AN ORIGINAL PLAY, "DANTE AND BEATRICE", IS FOUND IN THE APPENDIX. (RL)

# DANTE

Seventh Centennial  
1265-1965

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**Considerate la vostra semenza:**

**fatti non foste a viver come bruti,  
ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza.**

**—Inferno, Canto XXVI, 118-120**

**(Think of your origin:**

**You were not made to live like brutes,  
But to follow virtue and knowledge.)**

Curriculum Bulletin • 1965-66 Series • No. 16

# DANTE

Seventh Centennial  
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## FOREWORD

It is appropriate that on this seven hundredth anniversary of Dante Alighieri's birth the schools of New York City pay tribute to the Florentine poet. One hundred years ago, John Ruskin called him "the central man of all the world," and only yesterday, as it were, an eminent American scholar described him as Everyman. Indeed, thinkers of every age, from Dante's own medieval period to today's space era, have recognized that he represents something unique in the intellectual and spiritual history of the world: the perfect balance of man's imagination, intellect and will involved in questions of timeless concern to all men, in the problem of good and evil.

The cornerstone of Dante's belief is spiritual liberty, the inviolable freedom of man's will. The force of this credo is apparent in the allegory and intent of Dante's work, especially *The Divine Comedy*.

This belief will challenge the thinking of our pupils. Like Dante, they are undertaking at this moment of history an awesome journey to the boundless realms of the universe. Like Dante, they will find life's experiences and values tested in their own tremendous voyages of exploration.

To bring the poetic, intellectual and philosophical aims of Dante within the reach of our pupils and to give our pupils some contact with Dante, a great spiritual forebear of all modern men, are among the aims of this resource bulletin. It has been prepared as a guide for teachers at all levels. The outlined lessons and other materials are suggestions for enriching the teaching of all subjects with some appropriate reference to the life, time and works of Dante. Certainly there is inspirational value for every pupil in the life and work of this man who was indeed a man of his age, but also a man of the future.

It is hoped, therefore, that teachers will utilize this resource bulletin in the interests of a dynamic, rich curriculum.

JOSEPH O. LORETAN  
*Deputy Superintendent of Schools*

September, 1965

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## INTRODUCTION

Part I of this publication is designed to provide background information on Dante Alighieri's life, times and work, with summaries of his major writing. In this section, the teacher also will find brief notes on the influence of Dante on world literature.

Part II presents suggested approaches for relating the study of Dante to the following areas: language arts and library, social studies, mathematics, astronomy, guidance, music, art, and dance. Sample lessons and activities are included. (Since Dante and his works are a regular part of the course of study in Italian, no material in this area is included.)

It should be noted that this publication has been prepared for both elementary and secondary school teachers. Thus, some areas are presented exclusively for teachers of younger pupils while others are planned for teachers on higher levels. It will, therefore, be at the discretion of each teacher to adapt the material to the age and interest level of his particular pupils. For elementary classes, the teacher may prefer to combine several of the areas into a simplified unit appropriate to his pupils.

This publication concludes with a bibliography and an Appendix which reproduces an original play commemorating the seven hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth.

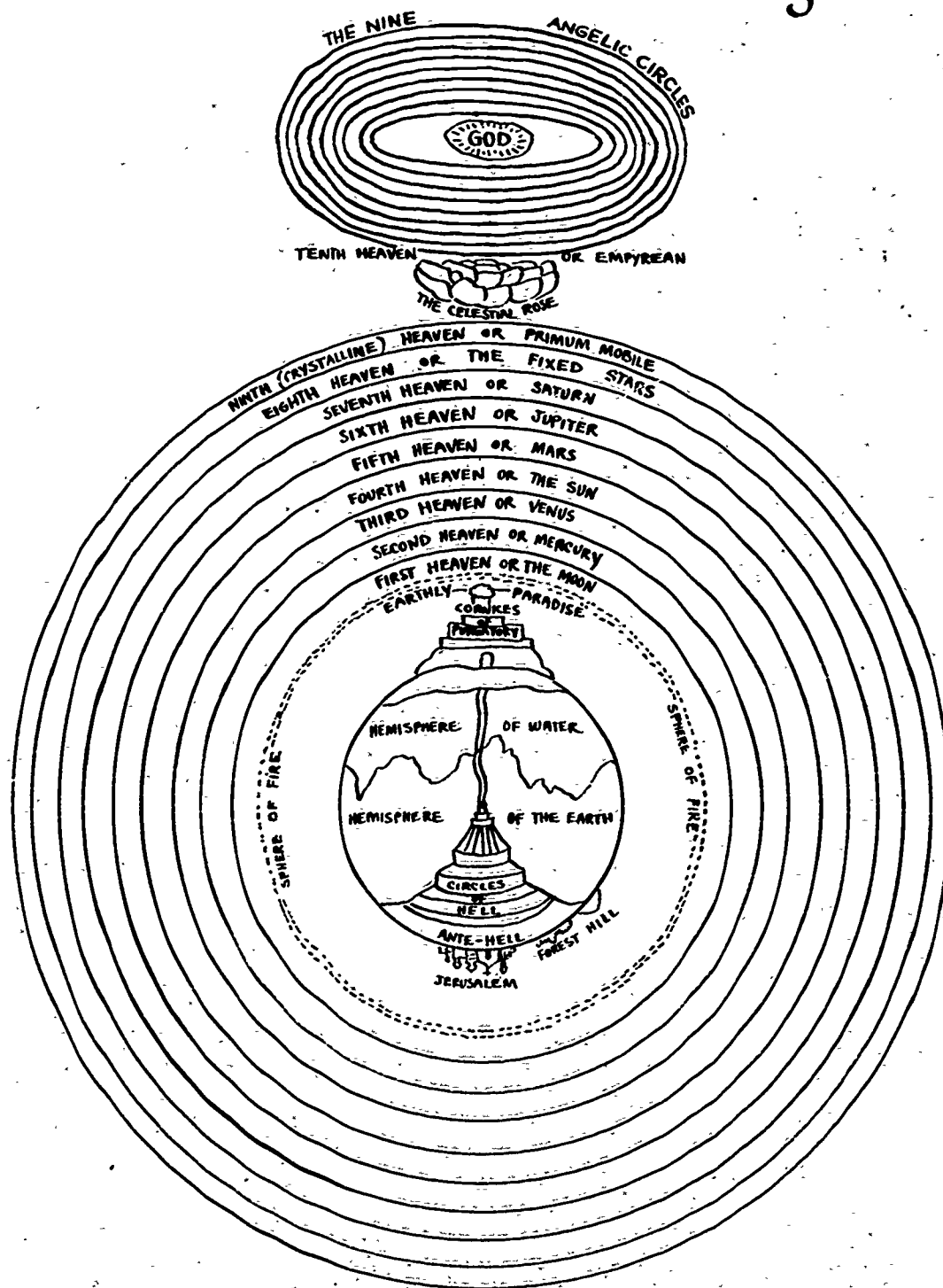
Part I  
**DANTE ALIGHIERI:**  
**THE MAN AND HIS WORKS**

*To Dante*

King, who hast reigned six hundred years and grown  
In power, and ever growest. (Alfred Lord Tennyson)

(Written in 1865, on the 600th anniversary of the birth of Dante,  
at the request of the city of Florence, Italy.)

# The World or Cosmos of the Divine Comedy







## DANTE ALIGHIERI

Dante Alighieri is a man for all times, a poet addressing himself to men of all eras, inviting men to study the human state, urging men to examine and understand their own majestic nature.

### BIOGRAPHY

#### Early Life

Very little is known about Dante Alighieri's early life. Almost all the known facts about his infancy and adolescence have been culled from his first biographers, Giovanni Boccaccio and Leonardo Bruni, and from his own indications in the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convivio*, or the *Divina Commedia*. Other data have been inferred from the circumstances or experiences of his lifetime as described in his writing.

The Alighieris were an ancient Tuscan family of high social standing and comfortable means. Their most illustrious ancestor was a knight named Cacciaguida. He participated in a crusade to Palestine in 1147 and died in the Holy Land during this same unsuccessful crusade. The son of this famous Cacciaguida married a girl whose maiden name was Alighieri. To her first-born son she gave the name Alighiero. This name passed on for two generations to Durante, born in Florence in May, 1265, and forever after

known as Dante Alighieri. Dante's mother died soon after her infant's birth, and his father remarried.

### Education

Dante Alighieri attended the Franciscan School in the Monastery of Santa Croce. It is assumed that there he received the usual education of a Florentine youth of his circumstances. He must, therefore, have pursued a classical course, with special training in Latin.

From his own writings, it appears that after the death of his father, he came under the tutelage of Brunetto Latini, one of the most erudite men in medieval Italy, and author of an encyclopedic work called *Il Tesoro* (*Thesaurus* or *Treasury*). Latini inspired Dante to study Virgil, Lucan, Ovid, Horace and Statius.

In his youth, Dante also studied rhetoric, poetry and mathematics. His knowledge of astronomy came, in part, from his study of such works as the ninth-century Arabic scholar Alfraganus' *Elementa Astronomica*.

Dante's biographers relate also that his education included a study of music and painting. Many of Dante's friends, moreover, were well-known musicians of his day. One of the most engaging episodes in the *Purgatorio* occurs in the second canto, in which Dante encounters his old friend, Casella. In this meeting, Casella sings one of the lyrics from the *Vita Nuova*; viz., "Amor che nella mente mi ragiona." ("Love that in my mind reasons with me.") Another of Dante's great friends was Giotto, the father of the glorious painting that was to be born in Florence, to flourish in Florence and in Rome for the next two centuries, and to influence great art to the present time.

Evidences of familiarity with song, dance, musical composition and painting are found throughout the major work of Dante, *The Divine Comedy*.

### Young Poet

From the age of eighteen, Dante was a prolific writer of poetry. He tells that he learned to say things in rhyme by himself. His early writing consisted mainly of poems of courtly love. In one of his early sonnets, Dante created this magical line: "Amore e 'l cor gentile sono una cosa." ("Love and the gentle heart are one, same thing.") Love for Dante means new life in the spirit of man.

### Philosophy and Miscellaneous Learning

Dante's reading of books for private study covered a wide intellectual range. The reading of Boethius and Cicero, of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, had fired his intellect. Aristotle became the subject of Dante's

avid private research. In the *Vita Nuova*, Dante called Aristotle "the philosopher." In other works, especially the *Convivio*, the poet refers to Aristotle as "my master," "the master of human reason," and "the glorious philosopher to whom nature opened wide her secrets."

Dante read widely also the works of the Fathers of the Church, particularly St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bernard, St. Peter Lombard. Throughout his life, Dante never abandoned reading another volume—the Bible. The many Scriptural allusions in all his works indicate a familiarity in depth with the Old and New Testaments.

Needless to say, like all cultured gentlemen of his times, Dante studied the classical and Christian historians, the medieval encyclopedias and all the great works that kept him in the area of learning as an ongoing process.

### **Beatrice**

Dante first met Beatrice when he was nine years old. His love for Beatrice strongly influenced his entire life, and also deeply affected the content of all his literary output.

In *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life), Dante describes his first encounter with Beatrice and the abiding love he had for her throughout his life. After the first meeting, nine years elapsed before Dante saw her again. And at this second meeting, she merely acknowledged him with a simple greeting. Beatrice indeed inspired Dante to compose poems of love, but there is no proof that the historical Beatrice either responded to his feelings or was even aware of them. Beatrice's marriage to Simone deBardi did not dim Dante's ardor for her. When she died in 1290, still a very young woman, Dante was inconsolable in his sorrow. He began to envisage her as an ideally perfect being, embodying the gentle feminine influence capable of dignifying and uplifting human life, and imparting a purifying force to love.

### ***La Vita Nuova* (The New Life)**

This work is a combination of prose and lyric poetry. It is an autobiographical work tracing Dante's origins and the course of his love for Beatrice. His love becomes spiritual for this woman, who is the embodiment of the good and the pure. He refers to her as *donna-angelo* (woman-angel). It is interesting to see that later in Dante's work, in *The Divine Comedy*, Beatrice becomes an allegorical figure, divine revelation.

Dante's relationship with Beatrice has been immortalized in great lyric poetry in this work. Nevertheless, this ardent yet unfulfilled love has been the subject of scholarly discussion and analysis. How could a boy of nine, it has been argued, react with such strong emotions to a girl of eight? The persistence of this great love, even after the death of Beatrice, is

equally enigmatic. He refers to Beatrice sometimes with awe, sometimes with shyness, always with a sense of the supernatural.

Fair lady, I think I see God  
When I behold your fair person.

The sad strain of all the poetry in *La Vita Nuova* describes the pain of the poet, who seems certain that Beatrice is unattainable.

The conclusion of the *Vita Nuova*, however, gives the key to the role of Beatrice: she is the inspiration for *The Divine Comedy*. The poet is resolved to immortalize Beatrice in a future work:

A wondrous vision appeared to me, in which  
I saw things which made me to promise to speak  
no more of this blessed one, until, if it please  
God, I shall yet write concerning her what hath  
not before been written of any woman.



Culver Service

*Dante and Beatrice on the Ponte Vecchio.*

### **Dante's Marriage**

In 1283, when his son Dante was 10, the elder Alighiero had arranged for the young man's marriage to Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati. Donati later became the leader of the political party opposed to Dante. Very little is known about this marriage, which was solemnized in 1292. While Dante never mentions his wife or marriage in any of his works, there is still no evidence that the marriage was not a happy one. The poet had two sons, Jacopo and Pietro, and a daughter, Antonia. There is evidence also of a third son, Giovanni, and perhaps a fourth, Dante. About these two there is scant information.

Pietro is famous for his commentary on his father's *Commedia*, a study showing that the author shared with his famous father a great range of learning and a zealous passion for right and for truth. A doctor in law from the University of Bologna, Pietro was a successful lawyer and later a judge in Verona.

Jacopo also tried to write a commentary of his father's great work. He succeeded, however, in completing only the *Inferno*, because he succumbed to the Black Death in 1384. It is very poignant that Jacopo referred to his father's masterpiece as "my little sister." He felt that the *Commedia* and he, both having had the same father, were indeed brother and sister. Often he referred to the lovely phrases and lofty concepts in the great poem as "le bellezze che mia sorella nel suo lume porta," ("the beauties in my little sister's eye.")

Dante's daughter, Antonia, entered the convent of Santo Stefano dell'Uliva in Ravenna and spent her days in prayer and meditation as Sister Beatrice.

### **Florentine Citizen**

Dante took a very active part in the political life of the turbulent city-state of Florence. Since it was a prerequisite for political activity to be a Guild member, Dante enrolled in the *Medici and Speciali*, the Physicians' and Apothecaries' Guild.

In the 1280's, Dante served Florence as a soldier. He participated in the military assistance supplied by Florence to Siena, when the latter city was attacked by the Ghibellines of Arezzo in 1285. It is also certain that Dante fought in the battle of Campaldino in June, 1289. There were many other skirmishes in which Florence participated during the next fifteen years: against Siena, against Pisa, in support of Lucca. Dante, the soldier, doubtless took part in some of these.

Dante at this time was also intensely interested in the promulgation of the Ordinances of Justice in Florence in 1293. These measures had been



passed to defend peace-loving Florentines against the brawls, spiteful measures and decrees of the noblemen. By inscribing himself in the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, one of the lesser guilds of the era, Dante showed that he was placing himself on the side of the people.

Two principal political parties, with roots deep in the strifes and vicissitudes of the Holy Roman Empire, opposed each other in the late Middle Ages in the city-states of central and northern Italy, viz., the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. Guelf is a form derived from the Germanic *Welf*, the name of the family controlling the duchies of Bavaria and Saxony in the 1300's. On the other hand, Ghibelline comes from *Weiblingen*, the name of the estate of the Hohenstaufen Family, which was fighting against the Welfs for the throne of Germany.

In the city-states of Italy, sympathies for either Guelf or Ghibelline were forming. The Guelfs supported the pope, mainly Pope Boniface VIII, a strong figure who intervened drastically at this time in the history of Florence. The Ghibellines favored the Emperor.

Soon there was a rift in the Guelfs. Two factions arose: the Blacks and the Whites. The Whites, composed of middle-class sympathizers, favored the preservation of peace. The Blacks, whose members were mainly noblemen, wanted at any cost the integration of Florence into the life of the other city-states of Italy. The Blacks were supported by the Pope.

In November, 1301, the Blacks, backed by the Pope and by Charles of Valois, seized control of Florence. With other leaders of the Whites, Dante was exiled from the city he loved. In the *Convivio* he refers to Florence as "the loveliest and most renowned of all the daughters of Rome." He wrote in another work, the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, "There is no lovelier place in all the earth than Florence."

Dante loved Florence, his native city, so deeply that he suffered all the more in his banishment from it. The politics of the Florentine city-state were the subject of Dante's rancor. "He hates the nationalism of the German kings, because nationalism interferes with the supranational work of the Holy Roman Empire. He hates the secular ambition that he attaches, rightly or wrongly, to the name of Pope Boniface VIII, because secular ambition is bound to make a pope fail in his duty to Christendom. So, too, in Florence, Dante hates the factiousness of Guelfs and Ghibellines, of Blacks and Whites, because factiousness and peace simply do not go together."<sup>1</sup>

## Exile

Few facts are known about the rest of Dante's life. He wandered from city to city in Italy, hoping constantly to return to his beloved Florence on the

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Walsh, S.J. *Dante Alighieri*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishers, 1946, p. 48.

banks of the Arno. From Verona, he went to Sarzana, Lucca, Venice, other cities of Liguria, and probably even to Paris. In 1318 he finally settled in Ravenna.

Many of his works were written during his exile. Among them are *Il Convivio*, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and the *Divina Commedia*.

### Death

Dante died in Ravenna on September 14, 1321. There, in a small church, he was buried with honors in the habit of the Franciscan friars. There, an eternal flame, fed with oils sent from all the regions of Italy, keeps alive forever the memory of Italy's greatest poet and of one of the few great universal poets of all men and all time.

Giovanni Boccaccio's sonnet on Dante's death follows:

Dante am I,—Minerva's son, who knew  
With skill and genius (though in style obscure)  
And elegance maternal to mature  
My toil, a miracle to mortal view.  
Through realms tartarean and celestial flew  
My lofty fancy, swift-winged and secure;  
And ever shall my noble work endure.  
Fit to be read of men, and angels, too.  
Florence my earthly mother's glorious name;  
Step-dame to me, whom from her side she thrust,  
Her duteous son; bear slanderous tongues the blame;  
Ravenna housed my exile, holds my dust;  
My spirit is with him from whom it came—  
A parent envy cannot make unjust.

(translated by Francis C. Cary)

### THE MINOR WORKS

#### *De Monarchia* (Monarchy)

Dante's plan for this work, which was written in Latin between 1312 and 1313, was to resolve three problems in three books. The first book contains sixteen sections. Through human reason, the necessity of a temporal monarchy as the ideal form of government for Italy is established. The second book, in twelve sections, arrives at the same conclusion using divine authority as the means of proving the point. The third book is timeless. The question it poses, viz., the church-state issue, is as alive today as it was in the time of Dante when the Pope sometimes used his temporal power to enter into the affairs of states.

The seminal ideas proposed by Dante in the *De Monarchia* and the political insights favoring monarchy are not particularly acceptable to us as believers in democracy. The idealization of the monarchy and the defense of the Divine Right of Kings theory are anachronistic and alien to the twentieth-century person. Yet, in its special context and in its relationship to its particular time, the work of Dante is not only understandable but also reasonable and acceptable.

Certainly, in some of his thinking in the *De Monarchia*, Dante proved himself to be a forerunner of the aspirations and hopes expressed by the leaders of the United Nations who meet in the monolithic glass and marble structure on the East River to give meaning to the life of every man in every land:

There is one task that only a world community can achieve—the never-ending and collective task of turning, first, into clear ideas all that human heads can think and then, into concrete things all that human hands can make. (*De Monarchia*, I, iv, 1.)<sup>1</sup>

### ***Questio de Aqua et de Terra (Problems of Water and Earth)***

This treatise, written in Latin, was completed in 1320 for Can Grande della Scala. In the 24th section of the work, Dante calls himself "the least of the philosophers." Of great interest are Dante's discussions of the longitude and latitude of the earth and his treatment of the earth's declination of 23 degrees from the Arctic and Antarctic Polar Axes.

### ***Il Convivio (The Banquet)***

The *Convivio* was intended to be a banquet of knowledge. Dante wrote this work between 1304-1308. It is a work of his mature years, in contrast with *La Vita Nuova*, written in his youth.

The original plan of the *Convivio* envisaged fifteen treatises. Only three, however, were finished. The *Convivio* also contains three philosophical sonnets in which Dante sets forth his political philosophy.

The introduction relates the poet's journey through Italy as a pilgrim, an exile banished from his beloved Florence. The subject of the first treatise is Dante's plea on his own behalf. He feels the need to reestablish himself in the eyes of those who knew him in the misery of his exile and of those who might have thought him an unfaithful lover. The second treatise discusses morality; the third, nobility.

<sup>1</sup>Translation by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J. *op. cit.*

While the *Convivio* is the least known of Dante's works, it contains many sections of great beauty. Familiarity with its broad outlines is necessary to an understanding and deeper appreciation of the *Divina Commedia* and the *De Monarchia*.

If the *Convivio* had been completed, it would have survived as a masterpiece of medieval philosophy and morality. In its actual state, it is important as a first example of Italian scientific and philosophical prose.

### ***De Vulgari Eloquentia***

Literally, this title can be translated as "Concerning the Speech of the People." Perhaps this translation of the title expresses more adequately Dante's purpose in writing the treatise than the more commonly used "Of Public Speech" and "The Art of Writing Italian."

Dante had planned a work in four books. He completed one and a half. In the beginning, Dante treats of the "philosophy" of language, which the poet feels belongs to God, to nature and to art. According to Dante, language is definitized by grammarians and artists. Feeling that classical Latin and Greek reached their perfection in this way, Dante hopes that the same will occur in the Italian dialects. Art, Dante feels, will reveal the hidden, inner beauty of a language for all of Italy.

Dante analyzes the fourteen main dialects of Italy. He considers the Roman dialect as immoral as Roman ways. He calls the Tuscan tongue a "turpiloquium," or "foul speech." He taunts the Genoese for their mispronunciations, citing mainly their overuse of the sound "z." The Bolognese he praises for a fairly good speech. Still, he thinks that the most limpid colorful and beautiful language of the Italians is to be found in the courts of Sicily and among the Tuscan poets. Dante suggests the creation of a new, official, classical Italian language embodying the best features of the Sicilian and Tuscan poetry.

Besides analyzing the structure of the language, Dante makes valuable suggestions for teachers and pupils. Dante conceives of language as only a tool of communication. Hypothetically, then, Dante would agree with the most modern concepts in the study of language.

After discussing the philosophical bases of language in this work, Dante gives rules for rhetorical interpretation of a lofty or noble style. He stresses the teacher's role in cultivating in pupils an aesthetic respect for the value of words, for the literatures of all lands. In Dante's day, such pedagogic signposts as *vocabulary development*, *comprehension skills* and *desirable attitudes and appreciations* were not set up in just those terms. Nevertheless, they are indeed implied in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.



## THE DIVINE COMEDY

### Inspiration

The major work of Dante was written while the poet was in exile. It was inspired by Beatrice, who, would be extolled as no other woman had been. His ideal love for Beatrice, "the glorious mistress of my mind," is the motivating force of the great masterpiece. She was the source of romantic love for Dante, but she was also the means of his reaching supernatural love. His apostrophe to Beatrice when she leaves him to take her place in paradise sums up the role of Beatrice in the natural and supernatural experience of Dante:

O donna, in cui la mia speranza vige,  
e che soffristi per la mia salute  
in inferno lasciar la tue vistage,  
di tante cose quanti' ho vedute,  
dal tuo podere e de la tua bontate  
riconosco la grazia e la virtute.  
Tu m'hai di servo tratto a libertate  
per tutte quelle vie, e per tutti'i modi  
che di cio' fare avei la potestate.  
La tua magnificenza in me custodi,  
si' chel'anima mia, che fatt'hai sana,  
piacente a te, dal corpo si disnoli.

*Paradiso, Canto XXXI, 79-90*

"O lady in whom my hope grows strong, and who for my salvation deigned to walk in hell, it is to your power and goodness I owe the grace and strength to see the things that I have seen. You led me from captivity to freedom by all those ways, by all those means, which you had power to use. Guard these gifts which you have lavished on me, so that my soul, which you have healed, may issue from my body pure enough to please you."<sup>1</sup>

### Title

Dante calls his poem a *Commedia* or *Comedy* for several reasons. The word "Commedia" refers to a work that will end pleasantly. Also the name is meant to imply that the style is not so lofty as the style of tragedy nor as simple as that of elegy. Apart from this theory, the poem is written in a new, lilting language, Italian.

The adjective *divine* was not part of Dante's own title for his work. To characterize the loftiness of the poem and the spirituality of its theme, the adjective *divine* was added to the title in the sixteenth century.

<sup>1</sup>Translation by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J., *op. cit.* p. 117.



## Structure

So unique is the structure of this poem that it is difficult to identify its form or to categorize it in a specific manner. *The Divine Comedy* has been called an epic. And indeed, in the episodes of the hero's journeys and vicissitudes and experiences in the world of the after-life, the poem is epic. However, it differs somewhat from most epic poems. Here, the hero himself is the narrator. Moreover, each incident is discrete and complete in itself; it does not affect the course of the story. The poet describes what he sees, how he travels, how he converses with particular people he encounters. The people he meets are not fictitious. Rather they are people whom Dante knew personally or by repute when they were alive. Above all, the poet's aim is not to entertain the reader but skillfully and artistically (often sternly) to point up the way by which the reader may purge his life through suffering and contrition and attain eternal happiness.

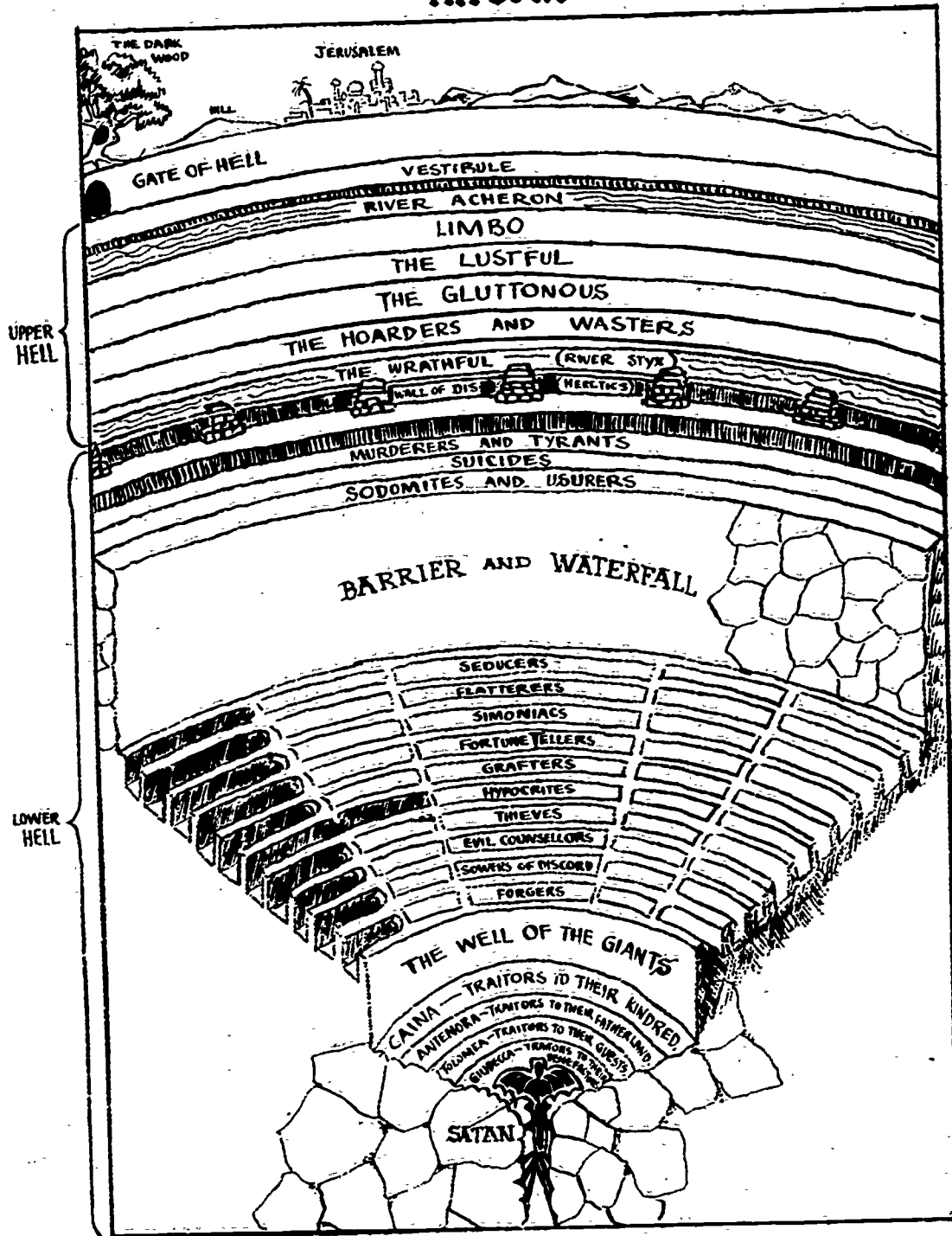
The poem is divided into three main parts: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), *Paradiso* (Paradise). Hell contains 34 chapters or cantos, while Purgatory and Paradise each comprise 33. The total number of cantos in the poem is, thus, 100. The subdivision of the poem into 3 parts, each part having 33 canti (one canto in the *Inferno* is considered prefatory or introductory) is interesting in the light of the medieval interest in numbers for mystical or religious reasons. For Dante, as for many of his contemporaries, the number three represented the Triune God, the Trinity. The number 100 had its significance as the square of 10, the "perfect" number.

The poem was written in a new poetic form called "terza rima," first used by Dante. It consists of a series of tercets in which the rhyme scheme is *aba*, *bcb*, *cde*, etc. It lends itself well to the sustained narrative, the picturesque descriptions and the many epigrams abounding in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

## *Inferno*

It is the Friday before Easter in 1300. Lost in a dense and frightful forest, Dante tries to find his path again. He arrives at a holy mountain which he cannot climb because he is confronted by three vicious animals representing fraud, avarice, pride. Virgil, human reason or wisdom, appears. He will lead Dante out of the forest to the heights of love and light, by an arduous but cleansing and illuminating voyage: first to the eternal place of pain or Hell, then to Purgatory where souls are cleared of moral defilement by fire, and finally to Heaven.

# Inferno



P.A.G.

### **Origin of Hell**

When Lucifer was plunged from heaven, he precipitated himself to the pit of an enormous, funnel-shaped region whose lowermost point is the center of the earth. From the top of this huge funnel or inverted pyramid to its bottom, there are nine concentric circles, which become smaller and smaller as one descends lower and lower to the bottom point, occupied by Lucifer himself.

### **Length of the Journey**

Dante's trip through Hell occupies one night and one day.

### **Sins Punished in Hell**

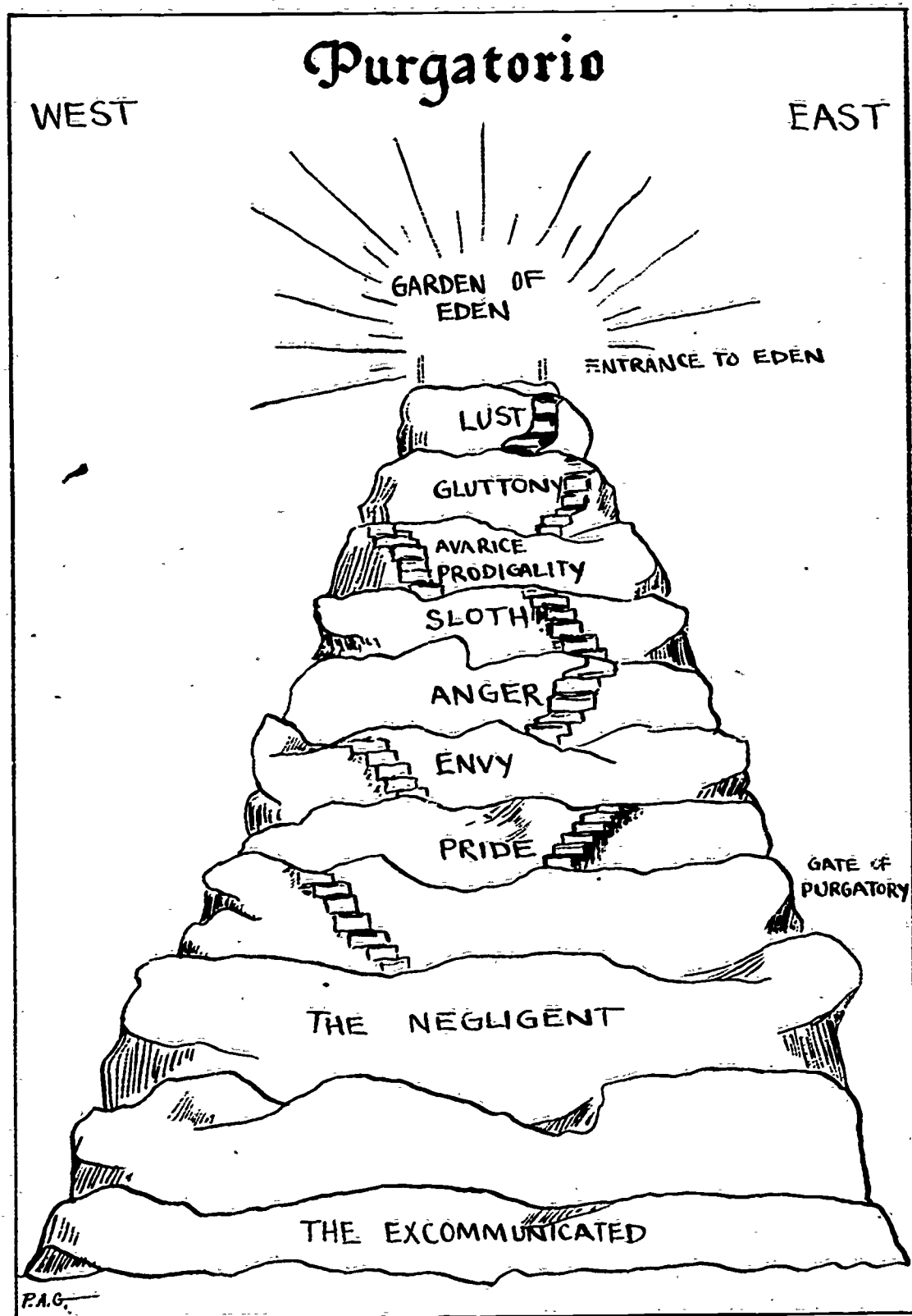
The sins and their consequent punishments become more serious the farther down one goes toward the end of the funnel-like pit. At the entrance to Hell, Dante reads a terrible message. This will be the realm where there is no hope. With Virgil he passes to the vestibule of Hell, there to find those who had lived their lives without regard for good or evil, those who in life never took sides, "who never were alive." Naked, rejected by both hell and heaven, these souls are forever being stung by hornets.

Dante and his guide cross the river Acheron and reach Limbo, the area of unbaptized souls. Next they pass through the circles of the sinners guilty of incontinence: lust, gluttony, avarice and wastefulness, and violent anger and spite.

Down a steep wall, Dante and his teacher encounter the eternally damned heretics. These sinners are buried in burning tombs. Farther down are the tyrants and murderers, the suicides, the blasphemers, sodomites and usurers. Dante considers here those who have been violent against their fellow-man (tyrants and murderers), those who have been violent against themselves (suicides), those who have been violent against God (blasphemers), against nature (sodomites), against art (usurers).

A great barrier and waterfall separates these sinners from the next group. It is to be remembered that as the poets descend, they encounter forms of sin which are more and more evil. In the great circles of the fraudulent and the malicious, the two poets encounter seducers, flatterers, simoniacs, fortune tellers, grafters, hypocrites, thieves, evil counsellors, sowers of discord, forgers.

Past the deep well of the giants, Dante and Virgil come to the frozen, icebound region where the giants of ancient mythology are chained around the circle. The evil wings of Satan or Lucifer blow such fierce winds that the ice never melts in this area of the most terrible of sins: fraud or treason. Traitors of kin, country, friend and benefactor are next only to Lucifer him-



self in evil. Imagine the traitors against kin: in life their spirit was so inhumanly cold and hard that they betrayed persons bound to them, persons who had trusted them. Now such traitors are bound forever by the ice which characterized their behavior while on earth.

At the very center of the earth is Lucifer, the opposite of everything good, noble and true. Satan has three faces here, and from his three mouths hang the most ignominious traitors of all time: Judas, who out of hate betrayed Christ; Brutus, who from ignorance, betrayed his country; and Cassius, who influenced Brutus to betray Caesar.

### ***Purgatorio***

#### **Origin of Purgatory**

When Lucifer was precipitated from heaven, he fell into an area in which the mountain of Purgatory was thrown up. Purgatory is in the shape of a pyramid rising in the Southern Hemisphere. It consists of nine ledges. The first two, the Antepurgatory, are reserved for the excommunicated and the late repenters. The next seven ledges are for those who are expiating forgiven mortal sins.

#### **Duration of the Poets' Sojourn in Purgatory**

Dante and Virgil employ twenty-four hours to climb from the center of the earth to the surface of the other hemisphere.

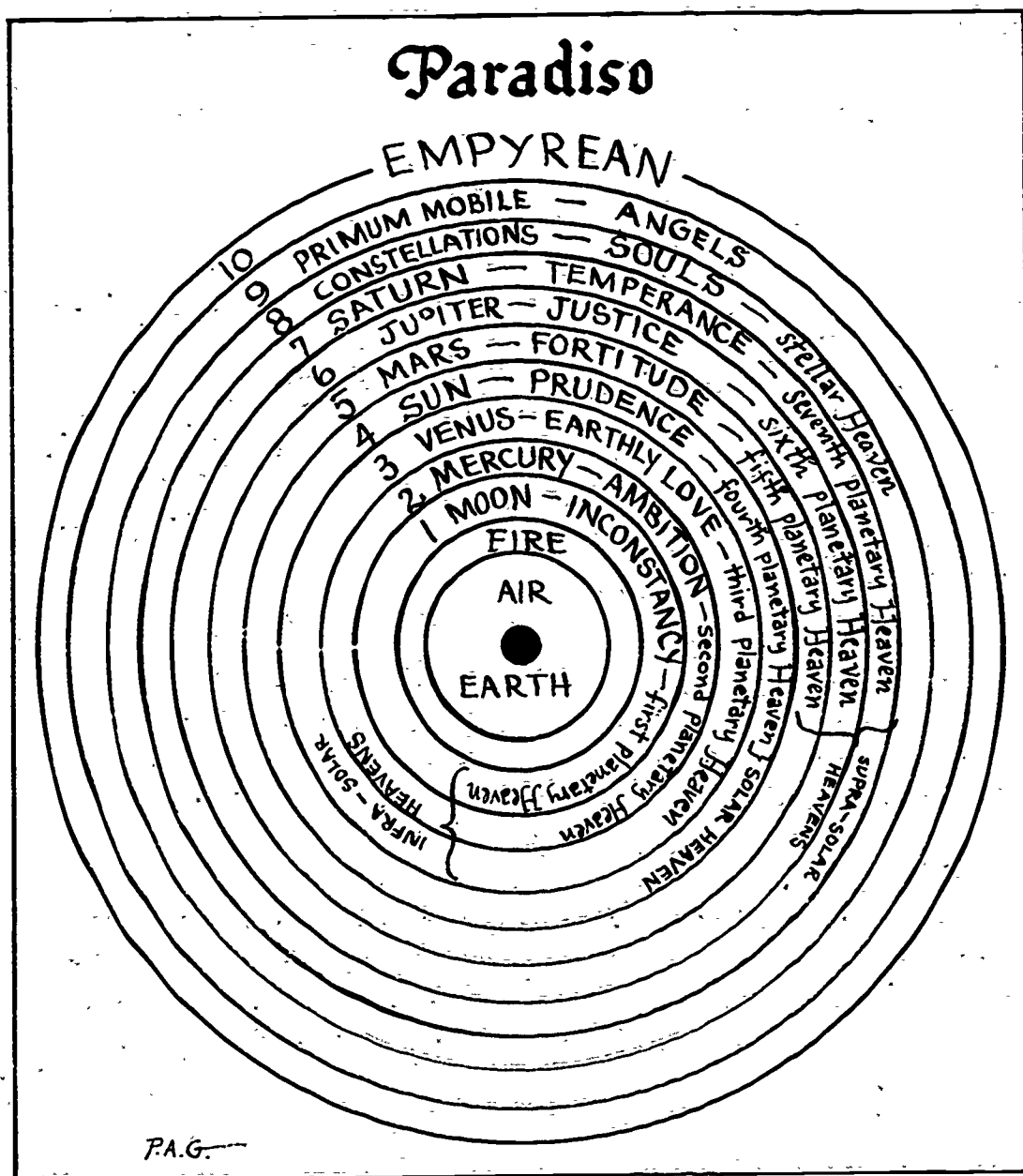
#### **The Sins of the Souls in Purgatory**

The seven cornices, terraces or ledges of Purgatory proper, hold the souls guilty of the seven deadly sins. When Dante enters the Gates of Purgatory from the Ante-Purgatory, the guardian of the gate marks his head with seven P's (*Peccati-Sins*). As the sin of each ledge is purged, one of the seven P's is erased. Each ledge offers examples, either inscribed or orally described, of the virtue which corresponds to the sin being purged. Thus, in the terrace related to the sin of pride, there are sculptures of the virtue of humility.

Dante finally enters the Garden of Eden at the summit of the mountain. Matelda, a friend of Beatrice, assists him here. First she plunges Dante into the waters of Lethe. Here he will forget all evil-doing. Then she will plunge him into the waters of the Eunoe, where the memory of good deeds is repeated and renewed. Now that he is cleansed, Beatrice appears. Beatrice is Revelation. On her arrival, Virgil, who is Reason, no longer can guide Dante. Virgil disappears. Revelation will now clarify what Reason was unable to explain.



# Paradiso



## **Paradiso**

### **Shape of Heaven**

Dante's Heaven is circular in shape. It is composed of the seven celestial spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, all of which enclose Hell and Purgatory in their circular motion. Above the planets are two more spheres, the Heaven of the Fixed Stars and the Primum Mobile. The latter transmits motion to all the others. The true Heaven, the tenth sphere, is the Empyrean, God's abode beyond space and time.

### **The Souls of Heaven**

The diagram on page 16, and that opposite 1, "The World of the Divine Comedy," shows the path followed by Beatrice and Dante in their journey among the souls of the blessed. In each of the spheres, Dante and Beatrice pause to speak with the souls therein. In the very end of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante is granted the grace of a mystic vision of God. Although very fleetingly, he is privileged to see in magnificent circles of light the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The "Love that moves the sun and the stars" has now taken full possession of Dante's spirit.

## **UNIVERSAL APPEAL**

The subject of *The Divine Comedy* is the ascent of the human spirit from sin, through purification to redemption or beatitude. Because Dante was influenced by Catholic theology, some knowledge of Catholic doctrine would be helpful to the understanding of the poem.

*The Divine Comedy* has through the centuries reached out to all mankind. For some, its political implications and its historical background have been of primary importance. For others, its artistic unity and elaboration have been outstanding. For still others, its spiritual message has been the chief facet. It is interesting to note that while few people think of the *Comedy* as a philosophical work, Dante himself in his dedicatory letter to Can. Grande della Scala states that the hidden sense of his poem is moral philosophy. It is his sincere hope that future generations of men will benefit from his awful sufferings, his purgation and eventual attainment of blessed immortality. In his own words: "The subject of the poem is man in so far as by merit and demerit he is liable to just reward and punishment."

Through the multifaceted genius of his spirit and intellect, Dante reaches

many individuals. He assists men to identify themselves with the respective episodes, tales, sins, virtues. Thus each person creates his own Comedy, his own way of life on his own journey to the attainment of salvation.

The universality of Dante's appeal is well summed up in the words of an enthusiastic writer: "Dante is not, as Homer is, the father of poetry, springing in the freshness and simplicity of childhood out of the arms of mother earth; he is rather like Noah, the father of a second poetical world, to whom he pours forth his prophetic song fraught with the wisdom of the experiences of the old world."

*The Divine Comedy* has been called "one of the last great Gothic Cathedrals." This would refer, of course, to the medieval concepts of philosophy, mathematics, and science which it contained. Also, since Dante dreamed of a united Europe under an ideal Christian ruler having power from heaven, the work would be considered medieval in its focus.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal in *The Divine Comedy* which renders it not only a Renaissance work but also a modern one. The classic features of the poet's style have definite Renaissance characteristics. Dante's use of the Italian language, a new, concise communication tool understandable 700 years ago and today to all people in a land of many city-states and many regions, would mark his work as Renaissance and modern rather than medieval. This is interesting considering the fact that Dante's contemporaries in England, France, and Germany were writing in a language not comprehensible to modern English, French and German readers. Above all, Dante's tremendous energy and vital activity in literature, war, diplomacy, politics, mark him as a man of the Renaissance and a man of today.

### Editions of The Divine Comedy

Even before the invention of the printing press, *The Divine Comedy* had been copied in 700 manuscripts. Yet the formal editions of the work underwent various degrees of popularity. In the last twenty-eight years of the fifteenth century, fifteen editions were published. In the sixteenth century, thirty editions were printed; in the seventeenth century, only three editions. Interest in the work was reawakened in the Age of the Enlightenment, the eighteenth century, which saw thirty-seven editions published. In the last century, the number mounted to three hundred and twenty editions.

The first three editions of the Comedy appeared in 1472. As early as 1502 there appeared the first pocket edition of the Divine Comedy set in the so-called, new *italic* type.

More recent editions with notes, commentaries and illustrations famous throughout Italy are those of Torraca, Casini, del Lungo, Pietrobuono, Scartazzini and Steiner.

## Translations

More than 300 times, *The Divine Comedy* has been translated in whole or in part into many languages, among them Latin, Spanish, French, English, Russian, Swedish, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese and Ethiopian. It is believed that the first translation of the work was the Latin hexameter version completed before the end of the fourteenth century by the Venetian monk, Mateo Ronto.

In no other language have so many translations of *The Divine Comedy* appeared as in English. The first English translation was made by Henry Boyd in 1802. This was followed by the excellent blank verse rendering by H. F. Cary (1814, then 1819), which has remained the standard English translation. Later English versions include those by John A. Carlyle, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Charles Eliot Norton, Charles H. Grandgent, James Russell Lowell. Most recently Dorothy Sayers' version of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, John Ciardi's translation of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* and Lawrence Binyon's translations of the *Comedy* have been favorably received for their readability and clarity coupled with their fidelity to the original thought and language.

An outstanding version of the *Divine Comedy* appeared on the occasion of the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth. For that commemoration, an erudite physician of Trieste, Dr. Saulle Formaggini, translated the work into Hebrew. He felt that the Israelites of Russia, Poland and the other countries of Eastern Europe who could not understand Italian might, through the Hebrew, learn to appreciate the beauty and depth of the poem.

## Impact on Other Lands

### ENGLAND

From the fifteenth century to the present, English writers and scholars have shown real appreciation of Dante and his works, particularly *The Divine Comedy*. Chaucer (1340-1400) was the first great English poet to be influenced by Dante. Both the *Canterbury Tales* and the *House of Fame* show definite traces of Dantéan influence. As a matter of fact, Chaucer's great interest in Dante helped acquaint not only England but also all of Europe with the work of this great poet.

Between Chaucer and Milton (1608-1674) there was an absence of interest in Dante in England. Milton's extensive travels in Italy and his study of Italian literature resulted in his admiration of Dante above all other Italian authors. *Paradise Lost*, more than the other works of Milton, reflects this influence.

H. F. Carey, with his first great translation of *The Divine Comedy* into English, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with his scholarly study of Dante



as a man and as a writer, created in England an atmosphere of better understanding of the Italian poet's work and greatness. To enumerate the many famous English writers influenced by Dante would be a capsule history of great English literature, for it would include William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, Thomas More, the Brownings, the Rossettis. Many great works of English literature from the Renaissance to the present day show references to *The Divine Comedy*, and reflect its influence.

### FRANCE

It is interesting to note that prior to 1550, there is evidence that Dante attained some fame in France, while for the two and a half succeeding centuries he seemed to remain completely unappreciated in that country. The evidence of Dante's works in France during the 14th and 15th centuries comes from the enthusiastic commentaries by Christine de Pisan. Dante's *De Monarchia* had helped to spread his fame in France. Nevertheless, Dante's political opposition to Medieval France and his anti-papal views, as expressed in *De Monarchia*, aroused much antagonism among the French.

In 1494, with the invasion of Italy, the French interest in Italian culture and Italian literature inspired what may well be the first translation of Dante's *Inferno* into French. The author of this translation, the *Turin Manuscript*, is unknown.

During the Age of Reason in France, the rationalist writers could not accept the work of this genius. Yet, Voltaire, who strongly opposed Dante's taste in choice of topics, nevertheless had to admit the beauty of the poetic language of Dante.

Serious recognition came to Dante's work in France in 1815, during the romantic-period in French literature. Not only were there a great number of translations of his works, but there also appeared some imitations and some scholarly commentaries of *The Divine Comedy*. Victor Hugo's greatest poems, "Les Orientales," "Les Feuilles d'Automne" and "La Légende des Siècles," and his novel, *Notre Dame de Paris*, evidence much Dantean inspiration. One of Victor Hugo's contemporaries, Théophile Gautier, was a pioneer among the French Romantics in reviving the *terza rima* of Dante.

### GERMANY

Dante Alighieri's first impact on German thought was the favorable reception of his anti-papal statements and his views on separation of powers as expressed in *De Monarchia*. When this work was first translated into German by Johann Herold in 1559, the people of Germany were impressed by the Italian writer who so admirably and courageously expressed their own views on government.



The first edition of *The Divine Comedy*, the Foligno edition, appeared in Germany in 1472, and this was followed by various translations of key episodes and short passages made between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century, however, that the Germans began to appreciate the literary talent of Dante Alighieri. Leberecht Bachenschwang, a lawyer, made the first complete translation of *The Divine Comedy* into German prose in 1767. August Wilhelm Schlegel's forty years of Dante studies resulted not only in commentaries and translations of segments of *The Divine Comedy*, but also in an increase in German interest in the Italian poet's works. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present century, Karl Witte, a Dante scholar of world-wide eminence, translated all of Dante's works and wrote much critical literature on Dantean thought and poetry. John of Saxony, under the pseudonym of Philalethes, also made numerous translations and commentaries on Dante's works. Philalethes translated *The Divine Comedy* into iambic pentameters in masterful German.

While Goethe made references to Dante only in the latter part of his own life, his *Faust* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are often compared.

## SPAIN

Sixty-four years before the discovery of America by an Italian navigator sailing under the Spanish flag, Spain discovered *The Divine Comedy*, through Villena's translation of the work in 1428. This was the first translation of Dante's epic into a modern European language. One year later, Andres Febrer introduced the *terza rima* into Spain with his rendering of *The Divine Comedy*. It is interesting to note that Spain's interest in Dantean translations antedates that of France by one hundred years and that of Germany and England by three hundred years.

After this first flourishing interest, there was a lag in Dante studies in Spain until the late nineteenth century. During Spain's "Siglo de Oro" (Golden Age), most authors preferred the works of Petrarch, Boccaccio and Tasso. In addition, the enthusiasm with which the Protestants accepted Dante's political views, especially as expressed in *De Monarchia*, discouraged the devout in Spain from reading Dante's works.

Such writers as Don Juan Manuel de la Penzuela, Don Pedro Puigbo and Don Manuel Aranda, and many other minor figures, produced Spanish versions of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the nineteenth century.

## UNITED STATES

The study of Dante was initiated in American universities during the nineteenth century. The oldest Dante collection in the United States is housed

at Harvard University, while the Willard Fiske Collection at Cornell and the complete Dante library bequeathed by Frances G. Macaulay to the University of Pennsylvania are among the finest in the world.

During the nineteenth century in our land, many translations of *The Divine Comedy* were made; original poems based on subjects from the great work were written; several biographies and numerous critical works were produced about the Florentine; and cultural societies dedicated to the study and promotion of Dante's works were formed.

America has contributed several splendid translations of *The Divine Comedy*. The American pioneers in this field, of course, were Thomas W. Parsons, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Charles Eliot Norton. Norton, as a matter of fact, was instrumental in establishing the Dante Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1882. Theodore W. Koch, formerly curator of the marvelous Fiske Collection at Cornell, and his successors in this post, Ethel Roberts and May Fowler, aided the promotion of Dante studies in the United States.

The first extensive biography of Dante to appear in America was the 1865 work, *Dante as Philosopher, Patriot and Poet*, written by Vincenzo Botta and published in New York.

In our century, Marvin Richardson Vincent produced a translation of the *Inferno* in New York in 1904. This was followed by translations by Henry Johnson, Melville B. Andersen, John Jay Chapman and Charles H. Grandgent. Within the past decades, poet John Ciardi translated the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* into verse. Many American Dantists in recent years have concerned themselves with the minute and detailed work of analyzing and interpreting difficult passages of the poem.

Two modern Americans, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, have encouraged the trend of poets' return to Dantean verse forms and poetic expression. While Pound is interested in Dante the technician of verse, the late T. S. Eliot admired Dante the thinker. Both poets have compared Dante to Shakespeare. Pound writes: "Here we are with the masters; of neither can we say 'He is the greater'; of each we must say, 'He is unexcelled.'"

### DANTEAN THOUGHT

It would be presumptuous to think that a booklet of this nature could even attempt to summarize Dantean thought. Nevertheless, certain ideas are characteristically Dantean and they recur throughout Dante's works. Some of these ideas are presented here.

*Dante's Subject — Man.* Dante's study is man himself, his destiny, his

deepest tragedies, his highest aspirations and victories. It is important, therefore, that the reader of Dante not limit himself to the literal meaning of *The Divine Comedy* but penetrate to the spiritual thought and spiritual lesson beneath.

Dante's universal appeal is made because of his belief in the desire of the human soul to know its final end, its goal after life. The poet's deep empathy with souls in the three realms of the next world is a reflection of man's interest in man. Thus in Purgatory, Dante hears a soul say, "I am Sordello from your old city." (Canto VI) Also in Purgatory, the soul of Nino asks Dante to take a message to his daughter, still in the world of the living. (Canto VIII)

Dante presents man in the world as a rational being with the power of free will. In his exercise of free will, man will either deserve rewards or merit punishment from Divine Justice. The beings in the *Inferno* freely chose vice; they are now beyond repenting. Those in the *Purgatorio* are undergoing the purification produced by the counteraction to the sin and eventually they will attain bliss.

Dante's conception of man's relationship to God is that man must find God's will through use of his intellect and must freely choose to follow that will. "N sua voluntade e' nostra pace." ("In His will resides our peace.")

*Love.* Another salient Dantean thought is the importance of love, as the bridge between the entire universe and God, its Creator, and as the bridge from man to man. Beatrice, who represents perfection, and is the woman for whom Dante had an ideal love, leads him from a personal, emotional experience to a universal one, "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars."

*A United Italy.* Dante became the prophet of a united Italy. As a poet he penetrated deep into the Italian soul. Intellectuals in Italy claimed him as their model, "Dante padre," ("Dante our father.") Other intellectuals claimed him as their hero for uniting Italy. Cesare Balbo, Gino Capponi, Ugo Foscolo, Giuseppe Mazzini, Gabriele Rossetti, Manin — all these Italian patriot-writers acquired inspiration and zeal from the *Divine Comedy*. Only oneness of language, oneness of culture could impart oneness to a land with so many warring kingdoms and free city-states, each involved with conflicting political parties and dialects.

He became the first to put into words the love of Italians for Italy as a united fatherland.

*Church and State.* Dante advocated separation of the church and the state. A moderate in government as in most things, Dante preached the application of reason and right order to governmental processes.

*The Mission of Poets.* As a poet, Dante felt that he had a special mission, a position of leadership, an obligation to teach.

Poets, like kings and scholars are men of light and leadership. Their artistic language, like ordered law and brilliant learning, is both an inner vision and a beacon for the rest of men. Out of a mass of regional vocabulary, intricate construction, faulty phrasing, and boorish pronunciation, the poets have elicited a language that is noble, simple, polished and courtly. And what a power their poems have over human wills and hearts! What glory and renown reward poets' efforts! This is why both they and their language are illustrious!

*De Vulgari Eloquentia*<sup>1</sup>

Thus does Dante define the poet's special mission. A man of light, the poet appeals to the intellect. He asks man to study the whole range of life, life's purpose on earth, life's ultimate end. A man of leadership, the poet is also a teacher imparting lessons in spiritual self-searching and self-conquest, in practical knowledge of good and evil.

Indeed, the *Divine Comedy* is, in the opinion of an eminent English critic of the last century, Dean Church,

one of the landmarks of history. More than a magnificent poem, more than the beginning of a language, more than the opening of a national literature, more than the inspirer of the art and the glory of a great people, it is one of those rare and solemn moments of the mind's power, which measure and test what it can reach to. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of Gerald G. Walsh, S.J.

## Part II

### TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Language Arts

Social Studies

Mathematics

Astronomy

Music

Dance

Art

Guidance





## LANGUAGE ARTS

Most naturally, the field of language arts presents a wide variety of learning experiences with Dante. Included for teachers are lessons in guided reading, vocabulary growth, composition, and poetry appreciation. Also included are a resource unit combining several language arts strands, and a reprint of an article providing many book titles for further appreciation of the Florentine poet and his cultural influences.

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### GUIDED READING LESSON

#### *Aim*

To teach a reading comprehension lesson of verses 97-105, 112-126 of Canto XV of the *Paradiso*, as translated by Lawrence Binyon.

#### *Motivation*

The teacher asks the class if they have ever heard their parents refer to the "good old days" when they are complaining about some present-day occurrence. The pupils are asked to talk about these situations.

#### *Development*

1. The teacher distributes the verses to be studied:

Florence within the ancient cincture sate  
Wherefrom she still hears daily tierce and nones,  
Dwelling in peace, modest and temperate.

She wore no chain or crown set with stones,  
No gaudy skirt nor brodered belt, to gather  
All eyes with more charm than the wearer owns.

Nor yet did daughter's birth dismay the father;  
 For dowry and nuptial-age did not exceed  
 The measure, upon one side or the other.

.....

Bellincion Berti girdled have I seen  
 With leather and bone: and from her looking-glass  
 His lady come with cheeks of raddle clean.

I have seen a Nerli and a Vecchio pass  
 In jerkin of bare hide, and hour by hour  
 Their wives the flax upon the spindle mass.

O fortunate! for each one was secure  
 Of her own burial-place; none in her bed  
 Deserted yet because of France's lure.

One would keep watch over the cradle's head,  
 And, soothing, babble in that fond idiom  
 Which maketh each new father and mother glad.

One, as the tresses off the distaff come,  
 Would tell the story in her children's ear  
 Of Trojans, of Fiesole, and Rome.

2. The teacher introduces the verses with the following brief résumé:  
 Dante, the famous Florentine poet, meets the soul of his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida in Paradise on the planet of Mars. They deplore the present state of affairs in Florence, beloved city of their birth. Cacciaguida describes the Florence of his own days, some hundred years before, with affection and praise.

3. The teacher reads the verses to the class, as they follow a copy at their seats.

4. A study of unfamiliar words is introduced:

*cincture* — that which surrounds; the walls of the city in the poem

*satè* — an old form for *sat*. Here it means *located*.

*tierce, nones* — third and ninth; i.e., bells announcing the 3rd and 9th hours after sunrise

*modest* — humble

*temperate* — restrained, in moderation

*dowry* — money and other possessions brought by the bride to the husband

*nuptial-age* — the marriage age

*Bellincion Berti* — the name of a nobleman of Florence

*girdled* — dressed

*Nerli, Vecchio* — noble families of Florence

*jerkin* — type of vest

*idiom* — language

*distaff* — a stick used for spinning of thread

5. The class is now asked to read the verses silently and to be prepared to answer the following questions:
- Which words indicate that Florence had been surrounded by older and smaller city walls?
  - How does the author express the fact that there still existed (in Dante's time) a church whose bells continued to announce various hours of the day?
  - Which words indicate that in the "old" Florence there was no civil strife?
  - There are two words which describe the old Florentines as being decent and restrained in their eating and drinking. Which are these two words?
  - In these verses Dante describes ancient Florence by referring to the city as though he were talking about a woman. Read these verses.
  - Should a woman attract attention by her own natural qualities or by her way of dressing? Which verses give the answer to this question?
  - Which words show that in Dante's times parents did not welcome the birth of a baby girl? Why?
  - Bellincion Berti was an ancient and honorable citizen of old Florence, yet he dresses very simply. Which words indicate this?
  - Which words show that Berti's wife made no use of cosmetics?
  - Nerli and Vecchio were two venerable citizens of old Florence. What was their manner of dress? What were the work habits of their wives?
  - At the time of Dante, there was a tendency for men to migrate to France for business reasons and to leave their wives in Florence. What does Dante say about this?
  - Dante pictures a lady like Vecchio's wife as singing lullabies and as using baby talk over her baby in the cradle. Which are the words which draw this picture? Dante also draws a verbal picture of Nerli's wife as she narrates ancient stories to her children. Which are the words that draw this picture?

### *Summary*

The class is asked to discuss one or both of these questions:

- What did the author like about old Florence?
- Can you guess what changes had taken place in Florence which caused strong dissatisfaction in the author?

### *Homework*

The pupils are asked to prepare one of the following assignments:

1. Interview your parents and find out what they do not like about present-day teenagers.
2. Draw a picture of any part of the verses which inspired you.
3. Write an original piece about present-day conditions in New York City.

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## COMPOSITION LESSON

### Vocabulary Enrichment

#### *Aim*

To teach the extension and enrichment of meaning achieved by simile and metaphor, when they are used to explain the unknown by a comparison to the known.

#### *Motivation*

The teacher asks the class to refer to the use of the five senses in perceiving things, qualities or acts. Briefly, the pupils are asked to discuss primitive man's perception of the difference between a long spear and a short spear. Later man used comparisons. We use them in our everyday speech. Elicit such metaphors as *crab*, *wet blanket*, *peach*.

Dante also effectively used comparisons from ordinary life to enrich his language. Let us examine a sampling of them.

#### *Development*

Teacher distributes mimeographed sheet containing the following brief selections:

As, when a newsgatherer with an olive-bough  
Comes, bringing news, the townsfolk throng to hear,  
Jostling each other unabashed, so now

Did all those souls, so happy as they were,  
Rivet inquiring eyes upon my face,  
Well-nigh forgetting to go make them fair.

*Purgatorio, II, 70*

The loser at the hazard, when the game breaks up,  
Sadder and sorrier lingers on alone,  
Re-plays each throw and drinks of wisdom's cup.

Off go the others with the lucky one;  
This tries to catch his eye, that jogs his back,  
One plucks his sleeve with: "Think of me anon!"

He pushes through—tips Tom, remembers Jack—  
And when his hand goes out, they melt away,  
Till in the end he's quit of all the pack.

So in that milling crowd was I that day,  
And turning here, there, everywhere my face  
Bought myself off with promises to pay.

*Purgatorio, VI, 1-9*

And as one who struggles forth from the deep to the shore and,  
panting, turns to gaze back upon the perilous waters, so my mind,  
still fleeing, turned to look upon that pass which never left anyone  
alive.

*Purgatorio*

2. The teacher elicits from the class the following:

1. *Selection 1*: comparison is with a newsgatherer (of old or even of our time).

Poet's use of senses:

*touch*: jostling, throng

*hearing*: bringing news

*sight*: with an olive-bough, jostling unabashed, rivet, inquiring eyes

2. *Selection 2*

1. Teacher reads it to the class.

2. Teacher elicits the following:

- a. Comparison is made between the winner in a street game and the poet amid the souls seeking his prayers and his help.
- b. The fate of the loser is to linger on alone.
- c. The fate of the winner is to make his way by payments through his new-found friends.
- d. Action words make the comparison here; viz., *lingers alone*; *replays each throw*; *drinks of wisdom's cup*; *catch his eye*; *jog his back*; *pluck his sleeve*, etc.

3. *Selection 3*

1. Teacher elicits comparison between swimmer and poet's mind.
2. Teacher elicits key words: *struggles forth*, *panting*, *perilous waters*.

4. *Medial Summary*

1. Successful comparisons (similes) in prose or poetry can be obtained by references to everyday, ordinary subjects as: *a bringer of news*, *a street game*, *an arduous swim*.
2. Effective metaphors suggest a relationship between the unknown and the known.

a—*Selection 1*: Known: the newsgatherer; Unknown: the poet



b—Selection 2: Known: the winner at dice; Unknown: the poet facing the souls who wanted something from him

c—Selection 3: Known: the swimmer; Unknown: the poet looking back at the treacherous pass

5. Teacher asks pupils to try to think of common similes or metaphors involving animals. The teacher will try to elicit such expressions as *quiet as a mouse, the truth was ferreted out, a leonine head, a bovine expression of calmness, a horse laugh*. Each of these will be explained by the group.
6. Teacher will ask students to write an extended comparison, similar to Dante's, involving any one of the animal comparisons just given.
7. The teacher will circulate among pupils to check procedure. Samples will be read to the class and discussed by the group.

#### *Homework*

Using comparisons based on things in your kitchen at home, write three extended comparisons using vivid words and actions.

#### *Additional Suggestions for Teachers*

The attached list is a small sampling of the many noted quotations from the *Divine Comedy*. They may be used in various ways in composition.

1. Students might be asked to do research on the canto, find the exact application of the quoted statement, and make an oral report to the class on their findings.
2. A student panel might present orally the pro's and con's of some of the quotations.
3. Some of the statements might be used as a springboard for a narrative composition.
4. Some of the statements might be utilized as the basis of a lesson in dialogue.
5. Pupils who have difficulty in writing English, might be asked to illustrate any one of the quoted statements.

He who sees a need and waits to be asked for help is as unkind as if he had refused it. *Purgatorio, XVII*

There is no greater pain than, in misery, to remember happy times. *Inferno, V*

Affection bends the judgment to her ply. *Inferno, XIII*

O faithful conscience, delicately pure  
How doth a little failing wound thee sore. *Purgatorio, III*

Be steadfast as a tower that doth not bend  
Its stately summit to the tempest's shock. *Purgatorio, V*

Men's customs change like leaves on the bough Some go and others come.	<i>Paradiso</i> XXVI
Fraud, that in every conscience leaves a sting.	<i>Inferno</i> , XI
To men prepared, delay is always hurtful.	<i>Inferno</i> , XXVIII
Their eyes seemed rings from whence the gems are gone.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , XXIII
The splendors of earthly fame are but a wind That in the same direction lasts not long.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , XI
O mortal men, be wary how you judge.	<i>Paradiso</i> , XX
Justice does not descend from its pinnacle.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , VI
If thou follow but thy star Thou canst not fail of glorious haven.	<i>Inferno</i> , XV
Things that do almost mock the grasp of thought.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , XXIX
It is the wisest who grieve most at loss of time.	<i>Purgatorio</i> , III
From little sparks may burst a mighty flame.	<i>Paradiso</i> , I
Ever to that truth Which but the semblance of a falsehood bears A man, if possible, should bar his lip.	<i>Inferno</i> , XVI
You were not formed to live the life of brutes. But virtue to pursue, and knowledge high.	<i>Inferno</i> , XXVI

## CHORAL SPEAKING

### Grades 6-12

To increase the appreciation of spoken literature by developing power in oral interpretation, and to achieve this by class interpretation of a segment of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, will be the aims of this lesson in choral speaking.

It is assumed, of course, that the class has had experience in choral speaking ranging from the simpler type such as refrain-type poems and two-part work to the more difficult type, sequential speaking. This lesson will belong to the last category.

The selection is the famous invective against the city-state of Florence from Canto VI (lines 130-155) of *Purgatorio*. A brief background for this segment, which is perhaps the strongest example of bitter irony in all of Dante's work, will be found in Part I of this curriculum bulletin in the section entitled, "Florentine Citizen."

## Materials

*For the teacher:* John Ciardi's translation of this selection as given below.  
*Toward Better Speech*, Board of Education of the City of  
New York, Curriculum Bulletin 1952-1953 Series, Number  
5, 1963 Edition, pages 81-95.

*For the pupil:* a copy of the text.

Florence, my Florence, may you not resent	130
the fact that my digression has not touched you—	
thanks to your people's sober management.	132
Others have Justice at heart but a bow strung	
by careful counsels and not quickly drawn:	
yours shoot the word forever—from the tongue.	135
Others, offered public office, shun	
The cares of service. Yours cry out unasked:	
"I will! I'll take it on! I am the one!"	138
Rejoice, I say, that your great gifts endure:	
your wealth, your peacefulness, and your good sense.	
What truth I speak, the facts will not obscure.	141
Athens and Sparta when of old they drew	
the codes of law that civilized the world,	
gave only merest hints, compared to you,	144
of man's advance. But all time shall remember	
the subtlety with which the thread you spin	
in mid-October breaks before November.	147
How often within living recollection	
have you changed coinage, custom, law, and office,	
and hacked your own limbs off, and sewed them on?	150
But if your wits and memory are not dead	
you yet will see yourself as that sick woman	
who cannot rest, though on a feather bed,	153
but flails as if she fenced with pain and grief.	
Ah, Florence, may your cure or course be brief.	

John Ciardi, *The Purgatorio*. New York: Mentor  
Books, 1964. Canto VI, lines 120-155.

## Procedure.

1. Test the voices of the class as a speaking choir.
2. Arrange the group according to voice quality: light, middle, and dark voices.
3. Teach the selection and discuss it for appreciation of its meaning, significance to the poet and his times, its mood of irony, its rhythms.
4. Allow pupils to select group leader of class speaking choir.

5. Allow pupils, under group leader, to arrange rehearsals of the class speaking choir.

6. Present the selection.

*Suggested Presentation*

Lines 130-132

Entire group

Tempo: slow to convey solemn mood

Emphasis on "Florence, my Florence."

Lines 133-134

Dark voices

Tempo: slow

Emphasis (to convey irony) on: "others," "Justice," "careful," "counsels."

Line 135

Light voices

Tempo: faster

Emphasis (again for sustained irony) on: "yours," "from the tongue."

Lines 136 and 137 through the word "service."

Middle voices

Tempo: slow

Lines 137 beginning with "Yours cry out" and 138

Light voices

Tempo: moderate

Emphasis on proper pauses to maintain the irony of the invective.

Lines 139-141

Entire group

Tempo: slow to fast

Pitch: crescendo

Emphasis on "truth," and "facts."

Lines 142 to 145 through the word, "advance"

Middle voices

Tempo: slow to fast

Emphasis: "Athens, Sparta," "law that civilized the world," "compared to you."

Lines 145 beginning with "But all time," through line 147

Dark voices

Tempo: fast to slow

Emphasis on "mid-October," and "before November."

Line 148

Entire group

Tempo: slow

Emphasis on "often" and "living recollection."

Line 149, words "have you  
changed"  
Line 149, word, "coinage"  
Line 149, word, "custom"

Entire group  
Tempo: slow  
Dark voices  
Middle voices  
Pitch: crescendo  
Tempo: fast

Line 149, word, "law"

Light voices  
Pitch: crescendo  
Tempo: fast

Line 149, words, "and office"

Middle voices  
Tempo: slower  
Pitch: lower

Line 150

Light voices  
Tempo: slow

Lines 151 through 154

Dark voices  
Tempo: slow  
Emphasis: the "f's" creating an  
effective alliteration.

Line 155

Entire group  
Tempo: slow  
Emphasis: solemn (sustained)

7. Have class tape their choral speaking of the selection.
8. Allow pupils, under chairmanship of leader, to evaluate their choral speaking as taped.
9. Suggestions of other selections from *The Divine Comedy* suitable for Choral Speaking.

#### *Inferno*

- Canto V—The Francesca da Rimini episode
- Canto XV—Dante and Virgil meet Brunetto Latini
- Canto XXV—The encounters with the centaurs
- Canto XXXIII—The story of Count Ugolino

#### *Purgatorio*

- Canto II—The Casella episode
- Canto X—The Emperor Trajan's experience with the sorrowing widow
- Canto XVI—Marco Lombardo and Dante discuss separation of church and state

#### *Paradiso*

- Canto III—The conversation between Dante and Piccarda Donati in the First Heaven of the Moon
- Canto VI—The discourse of the Emperor Justinian
- Canto XI—St. Thomas Aquinas on the Poverello of Assisi
- Canto XXXIII—St. Bernard's "Hymn to the Virgin"



## POETRY APPRECIATION

### LA VITA NUOVA, "THE NEW LIFE"; SONNET XXV

#### Aim

To help students appreciate Dante's intense feeling after Beatrice's death: a "new perception" of love. To develop in students an appreciation of the imagery and form of this sonnet.

#### Motivation

Describe briefly the contents of *The New Life*, telling the class how Dante met Beatrice. What view of love seems to be presented in this book? To what achievements has love inspired men? Or:

Discuss pro's and con's of "love at first sight" with class. Dante met Beatrice twice casually, when he was nine and eighteen. How might her beauty have affected him? Can love at such casual sight inspire? Discuss. Dante had a dream, described in *The New Life*, in which he expresses the fear that he would lose Beatrice. Her death made this fear a reality. What do poets usually do in their grief for loved ones? What might we be reading today?

#### Procedure

1. Before reading the poem, list the following words on the board, or show them on a vu-graph: *perception, untrodden, homage, pilgrim, abashed, subtle*. Use each in a sentence. Try to elicit meanings and write a simple glossary for students to follow at the board for comprehension of the poem.
2. Direct the students to active listening. Before the reading, ask: As we read the poem, what vision does Dante paint? How does this vision affect him?
3. Distribute mimeographed sheets to the class. Read the poem (sonnet).

#### SONNET XXV

Beyond this sphere which spreads to widest space  
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above,  
A new perception born of grieving love  
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways  
When it hath reached unto the end, and stays,  
It sees a lady round whom splendours move  
In homage; till, by the great light thereof  
Abashed, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.  
It sees her such, that when it tells me this  
Which it hath seen, I understand it not.  
It hath a speech so subtle and so fine,  
And yet I know its voice within my thought  
Often remembereth me of Beatrice:  
So that I understand it, ladies mine:

### The Meaning

4. To whom is Dante telling his story? (Refer to the last line.) Why does he write this line at the end of the poem?
5. How do we know that Beatrice is dead? (In addition to the three opening words of the sonnet, have students document their answers by referring to "grieving love" and other expressions in the octet.)
6. Have a pupil reread the first eight lines. Have students turn their papers over and "paint" the "new perception" in their own words. (What follows Beatrice "beyond this sphere"? Who is the pilgrim spirit? Why is she abashed?)
7. Why doesn't Dante "understand" Beatrice? (Sestet) How does he finally recognize that it is she?
8. *Medial Summary.* Into how many parts is this poem divided? If you had to write a title for each part, what two titles would you suggest? Why? OR: What single phrase used by Dante might be a title for the first part? A phrase for the second part? Discuss. What should the whole poem's title be? Why?
9. The last words written in *The New Life* are in the following prose passage (reproduced on mimeographed) sheet which the students have. What does Dante intend to do in life? What does he hope will happen in after-life? Discuss in terms of the influence Beatrice had upon Dante's life and the eventual "wonderful vision" culminating in *The Divine Comedy*.

After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision: wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily of her. And to this end I labour all I can: as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good to Him who is Master of Grace that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of this lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance who is blessed throughout the ages.

### Form and Language

10. Discuss the form of the poem, the Italian sonnet, with the class. Return to the two parts in terms of *meaning*, helping students appreciate the structure or form of the sonnet, with its intricate rhyme scheme (*abba, cbba, cde, dce*) and special metrical scheme. (Introduce the class to the poet-translator, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and his own love sonnets. If possible, as an enrichment assignment, have the class compare a Rossetti sonnet with this translation of Dante's Sonnet XXV.)

How does the special structure (two parts) help fix the meanings of the poem?

11. For this sonnet, students may be introduced to two poetic techniques: alliteration and rhyme. Rossetti has introduced several lines exemplifying alliteration (lines 1, 2, 4, 9, 11). Discuss with the class the poet-translator's difficulty with the task of achieving pure rhymes. Let pupils evaluate the rhyming effectiveness—or lack of it—of *space, stays, gaze; of this, Beatrice; of not, thought*.
12. In this sonnet, two language problems might be discussed: "*stands at gaze*"; "*often remembereth me of Beatrice*."

#### *Summary and Application*

13. Dante called his book *The New Life*. Why is this poem appropriate at the close of this book? Discuss in terms of meanings understood.
14. What kind of music should be played as this poem is read at a celebration commemorating the 700 anniversary of Dante's birth? Have pupils defend points of view based upon references to lines.
15. What deed is prophesied by Dante in the poem? In the prose passage?
16. What new meaning of love has Dante introduced us to in this poem? For whom does it have greatest significance—to a man of 20? 40? 60? Why?

#### *Possible Follow-up and Enrichment*

1. Drawings of images in Sonnet XXV.
2. Diary entry written by Dante on the day after Beatrice's death.
3. Further study of meter and rhyme of Italian and English sonnets.
4. Examination by students of illustrations of *The Divine Comedy* to present pictures to the class.
5. An imaginary sonnet written by Beatrice addressed to Dante.

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## RESOURCE UNIT FOR UPPER ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

### *Overview*

An intensive study of the works of Dante Alighieri is beyond the scope of elementary and junior high school pupils. A simple appreciation of his life, his times, his writings and his influence, however, can serve to acquaint the pupils with this great poet. It can also vitalize their participation in the worldwide celebration of the seven hundredth anniversary of his birth.

### *Objectives*

1. To learn the facts about Dante's life
2. To understand the times and places in which he lived
3. To become acquainted with his works
4. To learn about the writers he influenced

5. To learn about the artists he influenced
6. To learn about the music his works inspired
7. To understand his ideas and his impact on modern languages, on politics and on government
8. To develop an appreciation of his poetry through the study of a representative segment — the story of Ulysses from the *Inferno*, Canto XXVI

#### *Motivation*

1. Utilize current newspaper and magazine articles on Dante to stimulate interest in him.
2. Utilize the interest in stamp-collecting by discussing the commemorative Dante stamp issued by the United States Post Office Department on July 17, 1965.
3. Have the pupils listen to music inspired by Dante.
4. Make a bulletin board display.
5. Display books on Dante's works and times.
6. Show films and film strips.

For the above motivational activities, the teacher may find the following background materials useful and interesting:

#### *Item 2 above: The Commemorative Dante Stamp*

The Gorsline stamp was issued in San Francisco on July 17, 1965. The designer of this stamp is Douglas Gorsline, who also created last year's commemorative Shakespeare stamp. It is based on a painting of Dante by an unknown artist of the 16th century, which hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. In the Gorsline stamp Dante is shown crowned with the laurel wreath signifying the poet's crown. Above him, an angel unfurls a banner on which is written, "Seven Hundreth Anniversary," and at the lower left of the stamp are flames suggesting the *Inferno*.

For the teacher this statement of T. S. Eliot (*Selected Essays*, 1932) explains tributes paid to both Dante and Shakespeare:

Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them. There is no third. . . . Shakespeare gives the greatest width of human passion, Dante the greatest altitude and the greatest depth. They complement each other.

#### *Item 3: Music inspired by Dante's Works*

The story of Francesca da Rimini has been set to music by Tschaikowsky in "Francesca da Rimini." In Canto V of the *Inferno*, Dante observes sinners whirled about in gusts of strong winds. All these sinners had been lovers on earth, and in hell they are tossed about together to remind them of their sin while in life. Two of these sinners are Francesca da Rimini and Paolo. The beautiful Francesca was married to Giovanni Malatesta of



Rimini. Although he was a brave and outstanding soldier, he was deformed. Francesca fell in love with Giovanni's handsome younger brother, Paolo. Giovanni discovered this and killed both of them.

Puccini's opera "Gianni Scicchi" relates a story told in the *Inferno*, Canto XXX. In this canto are punished the sinners who have been "falsifiers of words, persons and money." A certain Simone Donati persuades Gianni Scicchi to impersonate his (Simone's) father, Buoso Donati, who had just died. He also persuades Gianni to make a will in Simone's favor. Scicchi does all of that but also manages to include some bequests to himself. Dante pictures Gianni as running wildly through his section of the *Inferno*, snapping and biting at other inmates like a mad dog.

Liszt's "Dante Symphony" and "Dante Sonata" also derive their inspiration from the Florentine poet. Liszt's works are more general in character in that they try to give an impression of the poem rather than any specific story from it. The two movements of the Dante Symphony are named "Inferno" and "Purgatorio." The subtitle of the Sonata is: "After Reading Dante."

#### *Item 4: Bulletin Board Displays*

Pamphlets and other materials on Dante Alighieri are available from the Italian Cultural Institute, 686 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10021.

Art reproductions at nominal prices are available through the various art museums of our city.

#### *Item 6: Films and Filmstrips*

Films and filmstrips may be obtained either in school audio-visual centers and district centers or directly at the Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction. A list of suggested titles is given below:

#### **Films**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Suggested Level</i>
<i>Art and Life in Italy</i>	J.H.S.
<i>Italian Children</i>	Elementary
<i>The World of Myths and Legends— Series 1 G 1957.</i>	Elementary
No. 7—"The Trojan Horse"	
No. 8—"Ulysses and Circe"	
<i>The World of Myths and Legends— Series 2 G 1958-1959</i>	Elementary
No. 8—"The Return of Ulysses"	



### FILMSTRIPS

<i>Life in Italy</i> 41960.12	Elementary
<i>Life in the Middle Ages</i> 49250.13	Elementary
<i>Golden Age of Italy</i> 48110.14	Elementary
<i>Living in Italy</i> 49460.1	Elementary
<i>Homer, Greek Writer of Epics</i> 28140.14	J.H.S.
<i>Life in a Medieval Castle</i> 49080.14	J.H.S.
<i>Life in a Medieval Village</i> 49080.15	J.H.S.
<i>Great Classics of Literature Series</i> <i>Odyssey</i> 29040.15	J.H.S.
<i>Ulysses</i> 32740	Elementary and J.H.S.

### *Development of the Unit*

#### *Suggested Problems*

A. What can we find out about the life of Dante?

B. What were the great interests of Dante's life?

C. Let's compare him with other great men with many talents. (Develop the "Renaissance man" idea with students able to grasp the concept.)

D. Who was Beatrice?

E. What do we know about life in the Middle Ages?

#### *Suggested Activities*

Form committees. Pupils to do the research.

Research leading to the discussion of Dante as scholar, soldier, diplomat, standardizer of the Italian language, observer and reporter of his times, poet, political thinker.

Compare to Leonardo da Vinci, inventor, scientist, artist; to Benjamin Franklin, diplomat, inventor, scientist, writer; to Winston Churchill, statesman, artist, writer; to Albert Schweitzer, medical missionary, musician, writer.

Describe idealization of women characteristic of the times. Recall Knights of the Round Table and accompanying concept of women.

Research reports. Show films and filmstrips.

F. What were city-states?

Research on city-states, Florence in particular. Point out rivalries often culminating in war.

G. Who were the "Blacks" and the "Whites"?

Guelfs and Ghibellines. Point out the similarities in our own political parties, with the major difference that our disputes are settled at the polls and not by warfare.

H. What modern parallels can be found of differences in beliefs that have led to warfare and actual division of a state or a country?

Point out the similarities in Korea, the Congo, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, even our own Civil War.

I. Besides *The Divine Comedy*, what are Dante Alighieri's other well-known works?

Elicit—*La Vita Nuova*

*Il Convivio*

*De Monarchia*

Dante's story of his love for Beatrice. A banquet of knowledge.

Dante's ideas of government—a forerunner of the idea of the separation of church and state, also a forerunner of world government concept. Seven hundred years ago, Dante thought of a United Nations.

In scholarly Latin, Dante defends and promotes the use of the Italian language.

J. What writers did Dante influence?

Explain periodic revivals of interest in Dante. Refer to Part I of this booklet, viz. Dante's influence on other writers. Include among the moderns: Dorothy L. Sayers, famous also for her mystery stories; John Ciardi of "The Saturday Review"; and T. S. Eliot.

K. Who are some of the artists influenced by Dante?

Botticelli, William Blake, Gustave Doré, Salvador Dali.

### ***Culminating Activities***

- A. Oral reports by pupils on their research
- B. Illustrated booklets prepared by the pupils
- C. Models of medieval cities or castles made by pupils
- D. Invitations to other classes and to parents to visit final displays
- E. Trips
  - 1. New York Public Library. Specifically to be seen:
    - a. View of Florence
    - b. First page text from *La Vita Nuova*
    - c. In the *Vita Nuova*, the Botticelli illustrations,
      - (1) Dante and Beatrice
      - (2) Dante and Virgil outside the City of Dis.
  - 2. Morgan Library (Permission must be obtained in advance for visits to this collection)
    - a. Woodcuts of Paradise, Florence, Beatrice, and Dante and Virgil (dating to 1491) by Cristoforo Landino. Commentary for each woodcut.
    - b. First text page of the *Inferno* with engraving by Baldini (1481) showing Dante's encounter with the three wild beasts in the opening canto of the *Inferno*.
    - c. Baldini's engraving of Dante and Virgil entering the city of Dis.
    - d. Dante, Virgil and Cato from *The Divine Comedy*, with commentary by Landino.

### **Lesson Plan: Study of the Story of Ulysses (*Inferno*)**

#### ***Aims***

- A. To acquaint pupils with the poetry of Dante by a study of the segment from the *Inferno*, Canto XXVI, in which the poet tells the story of Ulysses.
- B. To compare the Ulysses story in Homer and in Dante.
- C. To develop an appreciation of poetry.
- D. To analyze the imagery, poetic language and geographical references of the segment.

NOTE: Because the modern rendering of English will be more readily understood by the pupils, the John Ciardi translation of the *Inferno* will be used for this unit. (New York: Mentor Books, 1964. Book #MT 347, paperback, 75¢.)

#### ***Motivation***

- A. Show one of the films or filmstrips about Ulysses as suggested in Item 6 of this Resource Unit.

- B. Tell the story of Ulysses.
- C. Arrange a class display of the many available, pictorially attractive books on myths and legends of the Trojan War, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, etc.

#### Materials

- A. The story of the *Odyssey*
- B. Films or filmstrips on *Ulysses*
- C. A map of the Mediterranean area to plot Ulysses' wanderings
- D. A mimeographed copy of the Ulysses story as follows:

I stood on the bridge, and leaned out from the edge; (42)  
 so far, that but for a jut of rock I held to  
 I should have been sent hurtling from the ledge (45)

without being pushed. And seeing me so intent,  
 my Guide said: "There are souls within those flames;  
 each sinner swathes himself in his own torment."

"Master," I said, "your words make me more sure,  
 but I had seen already that it was so  
 and meant to ask what spirit must endure

the pains of that great flame which splits away  
 in two great horns, as if it rose from the pyre  
 where Eteocles and Polynices lay?"

He answered me: "Forever round this path  
 Ulysses and Diomedes move in such dress,  
 united in pain as once they were in wrath;

there they lament the ambush of the Horse  
 which was the door through which the noble seed  
 of the Romans issued from its holy source; (60)

there they mourn that for Achilles slain  
 sweet Deidamia weeps even in death;  
 there they recall the Palladium in their pain."

"Master," I cried, "I pray you and replay  
 till my prayer becomes a thousand—if these souls  
 can still speak from the fire, oh let me stay

until the flame draws near! Do not deny me;  
 You see how fervently I long for it!"  
 And he to me: "Since what you ask is worthy,

it shall be. But be still and let me speak;  
 for I know your mind already, and they perhaps  
 might scorn your manner of speaking, since they were Greek."

And when the flame had come where time and place  
seemed fitting to my Guide, I heard him say  
these words to it: "O you two souls who pace (75)

together in one flame!—if my days above  
won favor in your eyes, if I have earned  
however much or little of your love  
in writing my High Verses, do not pass by,  
but let one of you be pleased to tell where he,  
having disappeared from the known world, went to die."

As if it fought the wind, the greater prong  
of the ancient flame began to quiver and hum;  
then moving its tip as if it were the tongue  
that spoke, gave out a voice above the roar.  
"When I left Circe," it said, "who more than a year  
detained me near Gaëta long before

Aeneas came and gave the place that name,  
not fondness for my son, nor reverence  
for my aged father, nor Penelope's claim (90)  
to the joys of love, could drive out of my mind  
the lust to experience the far-flung world  
and the failings and felicities of mankind.

I put out on the high and open sea  
with a single ship and only those few souls  
who stayed true when the rest deserted me.

As far as Morocco and as far as Spain  
I saw both shores; and I saw Sardinia  
and the other islands of the open main.

I and my men were stiff and slow with age  
when we sailed at last into the narrow pass  
where, warning all men back from further voyage,

Hercules' Pillars rose upon our sight.  
Already I had left Ceuta on the left;  
Seville now sank behind me on the right. (105)

'Shipmates,' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand  
perils have reached the West, do not deny  
to the brief remaining watch our senses stand  
experience of the world beyond the sun.

Greeks! You were not born to live like brutes,  
but to press on toward manhood and recognition!

With this brief exhortation I made my crew  
so eager for the voyage I could hardly  
have held them back from it when I was through;



and turning our stern toward morning, our bow toward night,  
we bore southwest out of the world of man;  
we made wings of our oars for our fool's flight.

That night we raised the other pole ahead  
with all its stars, and ours had so declined  
it did not rise out of its ocean bed. (120)

Five times since we had dipped our bending oars  
beyond the world, the light beneath the moon  
had waxed and waned, when dead upon our course

we sighted, dark in space, a peak so tall  
I doubted any man had seen the like.  
Our cheers were hardly sounded, when a squall

broke hard upon our bow from the new lands;  
three times it sucked the ship and the sea about  
as it pleased Another to order and command.

At the fourth, the poop rose and the bow went down  
till the sea closed over us and the light was gone."

*Inferno*, Canto XXVI, 42-131,  
translated by John Ciardi.  
New York; Mentor Books, 1964.

Some teachers will prefer, to suit the needs of their particular classes, to have a prose version of the selection:

I stood upon the bridge, having risen so to look, that if I had not caught a rock, I should have fallen down without being pushed.

And the Guide, who saw me thus attent, said: "Within those fires are the spirits; each swathes himself with that which burns him."

"Master," I replied, "from hearing thee I feel more certain; but had already discerned it to be so, and already wished to say to thee:

Who is in that fire, which comes so parted at the top, as if it rose from the pyre where Eteocles with his brother was placed?"

He answered me: "Within it there Ulysses is tortured, and Diomed; and thus they run together in punishment as erst in wrath; and in their flame they groan for the ambush of the horse, that made the door by which the noble seed of the Romans came forth; within it they lament the artifice, whereby Deidamia in death still sorrows for Achilles; and there for the Palladium they suffer punishment.

"If they within those sparks can speak," said I, "Master! I pray thee much, and repray that my prayer may equal a thousand, deny me not to wait until the horned flame comes hither; thou seest how with desire I bend me towards it."

And he to me, "Thy request is worthy of much praise, and therefore I accept it; but do thou refrain thy tongue.

Let me speak, for I have conceived what thou wishest; and they, perhaps because they were Greeks, might disdain thy words."

And the flame had come where time and place seemed fitting to my Guide, I heard him speak in this manner:

"O ye, two in one fire! if I merited of you whilst I lived, if I merited of you much or little,

When on earth I wrote the High Verses, move ye not; but let the one of you tell where he, having lost himself, went to die."

The greater horn of the ancient flame began to shake itself, murmuring, just like a flame that struggles with the wind.

Then carrying to and fro the top, as if it were the tongue that spake, threw forth a voice and said, "When

I departed from Circe, who beyond a year detained me there near Gaeta, ere Aeneas thus had named it,

neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged father, nor the due love that should have cheered Penelope,

could conquer in me the ardour that I had to gain experience of the world, and of human vice and worth;

I put forth on the deep open sea with but one ship, and with that small company which had not deserted me.

Both the shores I saw as far as Spain, far as Morocco, and saw Sardinia and the other isles which that sea bathes round.

I and my companions were old and tardy, when we came to that narrow pass where Hercules assigned his landmarks,

To hinder man from venturing farther; on the right hand I left Seville; on the other, had already left Ceuta.

'O brothers!' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this brief vigil

of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world beyond the Sun.

Consider your origin: you were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.'

With this brief speech I made my companions so eager for the voyage, that I could hardly then have checked them;

and turning the poop towards morning, we of our oars made wings for the foolish flight, always gaining on the left.

Night already saw the other pole, with all its stars; and ours so low, that it rose not from the ocean floor.

Five times the light beneath the Moon had been rekindled and quenched as oft, since we had entered on the arduous passage,

when there appeared to us a Mountain, dim with distance; and to me it seemed the highest I had ever seen.

We joyed, and soon our joy was turned to grief: for a tempest rose from the new land, and struck the forepart of our ship.

Three times it made her whirl round with all the waters; at the fourth, made the poop rise up and prow go down, as pleased Another, till the sea was closed above us."

*Inferno*, Canto XXVI, 43-142

*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, The Carlyle—Wicksteed Translation*, New York: Modern Library, 1950

#### Preparation

- A. Tell the story of the *Odyssey's* highlights.
- B. Describe briefly Ulysses' role in the Trojan War. It is by this conduct that Dante judges him as a wrongdoer and places him in the circle of hell with the falsifiers. Here was a man of great genius who succeeded because of his power to deceive. Include the story of the Trojan Horse, which was planned by Ulysses and Diomedes and which brought about the downfall of Troy. Does the end justify the means? Dante did not believe so.
- C. Tell the story as Dante wrote it. Dante and Virgil are visiting the region of hell where dwell the falsifiers, those who on earth succeeded in misusing their genius by tricks and deceptions. They come upon a huge flame which is split into two sections. Virgil explains to Dante that this flame contains the spirits of Ulysses and Diomedes, who are suffering together for the wrong they plotted together while on earth. It was they who had brought about the downfall of Troy by plotting the use of the Trojan Horse. Virgil asks Ulysses to tell his story. Ulysses relates that after he and his men left Circe, he could not bear the thought of going home. The spirit of adventure still attracted him. Gathering together his faithful crew, now old like himself, he set sail once again. They dared to go beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, where no man had ever gone before, and were swallowed up by the sea and never heard from again.
- D. Clear difficulties by elucidating references to specific people, places, and things.
  1. *People in the Segment*
    - a. *Line 47*: Who is the Guide?  
Virgil.  
Great Roman poet of ancient times, author of the *Aeneid*, which tells the story of the adventures of Aeneas after the Trojan War.
    - b. Who is Virgil?  
Two brothers, sons of Oedipus, who were supposed to take turns ruling Thebes, but whose jealousy drove them to war against one another.
    - c. *Line 54*: Who were Eteocles and Polynices?

- d. *Lines 61-62*: "there they mourn that for Achilles slain, sweet Deidamia weeps even in death."
- e. *Line 90*: Who is Penelope?

2. *Places in the segment*

- a. *Line 97*: Morocco
- b. : Spain
- c. *Line 98*: "I saw both shores"  
: Sardinia
- d. *Lines 102-103*: What are the Pillars of Hercules?

- e. *Line 104*: Where is Ceuta?

- f. *Line 105*: Where is Seville?

3. *Specific Things referred to in the Segment.*

- a. *Line 63*: "there they recall the Palladium in their pain."

- b. *Line 99*: "the open main"

- c. *Line 115*: the stern of a ship.

the bow of a ship.

They killed each other. The flames of their funeral pyre were said to reflect this hate and split by bursting into two separate horns as it burned. (See reference to this in Line 53.)

Deidamia, Achilles' widow, is mournful. Her sorrow is also the result of the tricks of Ulysses, who persuaded Achilles to go to war.

Ulysses' faithful wife, who spent many long years awaiting his return.

Locate on map.

Locate on map.

The Mediterranean shores of both Africa and Europe.

Locate on map.

The Straits of Gibraltar.

They were so called because Hercules was supposed to have torn one mountain in two, thus forming the Pillars of Hercules or the Straits of Gibraltar.

Locate on map: It is in Morocco, opposite Gibraltar.

Locate on map.

The Palladium was a famous statue of Minerva. It was in Troy, and as long as it stood, the city of Troy could not be defeated. It was another of the tricks of Ulysses and Diomedes that they entered the city in disguise and succeeded in carrying off the statue.

The sea

The rear of a ship

The front part of a ship.

d. *Lines 118-120*: "the other pole"

The Southern Hemisphere

E. Proceed to reading of selection.

F. Discussion for appreciation.  
This might revolve about the following points in the segment:

1. *Line 48*: "What do you suppose the poet means by "each sinner swathes himself in his own torment"?"
2. *Line 54*: Eteocles and Polynices
3. *Lines 56-57*: Why does Dante say that Ulysses and Diomedes are "united in pain as once they were in wrath?"
4. *Lines 58-60*: "the Horse which was the door through which the noble seed of the Romans issued from its holy source." What does this refer to?
5. *Lines 64-72*: Dante wishes to speak to Ulysses, but Virgil dissuades him saying that he, Virgil, will act as intermediary or interpreter since "they perhaps might scorn your manner of speaking, for they were Greek."
6. *Lines 75-81*: Virgil asks Ulysses to tell what happened to him when he disappeared from the "known world."
7. *Line 86*: "When I left Circe . . ."

His conscience troubles him about the enormity of his sin.

Point out how the poet tells these stories in only one or two lines of verse. Despite this economy of words, there is great narrative and striking imagery.

They suffer together for the deed they committed together in life.

The Trojan Horse caused the fall of Troy. Aeneas thereupon left Troy, set out for many adventures and eventually founded Rome and its glorious line.

Virgil will speak for Dante because Dante, knowing no Greek, did not know Homer in the original but only in Latin translations.

Ulysses begins his story, speaking out of the wall of flame.

What is the story of Ulysses and his men while they were under Circe's spell? Have pupils recall this episode perhaps from the film-strip.



8. *Line 100*: What effect does the poet create when he writes, "My men and I were stiff and slow with age"?

These men have traveled for so many long years that they have grown old. Still they go on seeking.

9. *Line 103*: Why does the poet say: "this narrow pass . . . warning all men back from further voyage?"

The poet means to show the end of the known world beyond which no man would dare to go. This is a challenge to man's spirit of courage and adventure.

10. *Lines 107-110*: What does Ulysses mean when he says, ". . . do not deny to the brief remaining watch our senses stand, experiences of the world beyond the sun."?

Since they were so old and soon to die, they felt they should try to find out what lay "beyond the sun" or the farthest part west of the then known world.

11. *Line 115*: How does the poet establish a sense of direction?

He mentions that they turned the stern of the ship toward morning, the bow toward night. Therefore the front of the ship was facing west. It should be pointed out that the journey westward into the night conveys the idea of doom.

12. *Line 116*: What does the poet mean in the line "we bore southwest out of the world of man."?

For these adventurers, this was the end. Nobody had traveled there and lived to tell about it. Point out how less than 100 years after Dante, the contributions of Henry the Navigator succeeded in allaying these fears and led to the exploration of the West African Coast, the Atlantic Ocean and eventually to the voyages of Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus. Point out also the similarities in today's ventures into the oceans of space, as it were.

13. *Line 117*: "We made wings of our oars for our fool's flight." What does "wings of oars" suggest?

The seamen were very anxious for this adventure. They rowed so hard that their ship seemed to fly.

Why was this a "fool's flight"?

They knew there would be no returning.

14. *Lines 118-120*: What does "the other pole" mean? They had crossed the equator. They could no longer see the North Star and its constellations. They were now approaching the southern waters, and were viewing the stars of the Southern Hemisphere.
15. *Lines 122-123*: "Five times . . . the light beneath the moon had waned and waned." What does this indicate for us regarding the time of the journey? The pupils should be able to explain that since the moon travels in monthly cycles, five months must have passed on this trip.
16. *Line 129*: "Another" orders and commands the sea and the fate of ships. This is, of course, God.
17. *Lines 130-131*: ". . . the poop rose and the bow went down till the sea closed over us and the light was gone." As in line 54 referred to above, the poet in a magnificent economy of words, succinctly records a tragic event, in a clear, touching and most dramatic picture.

#### *VI. Evaluation*

- A. Have pupils give their personal reaction to this segment.
- B. Have pupils choose words or phrases that they liked and have them explain the imagery or meaning or such words and phrases.
- C. Have pupils compare the story of Ulysses as told by Homer to the story as related by Dante. Other pupils might be challenged to read Tennyson's work.

#### *Follow-Up Activities*

- A. Pupils could illustrate the story of Dante's Ulysses.
- B. Pupils could initiate a study of superstitions of the sea that have persisted from ancient times and of superstitions of the sea that have died with new discoveries and explorations.
- C. Pupils could do research and report on other mythological characters absorbed by Dante into the *Divine Comedy*, viz. Cerberus, Minos, Aeneas, Charon, Achilles, Anteus, etc. A study could be made of the traditional mythological treatment of these characters as compared to Dante's interpretation.
- D. Pupils could write their own episode of an adventure in space having a hero of Ulysses-like proportions.

## LITERATURE

### Dante Alighieri: Man for All Nations and Ages<sup>1</sup>

Dante Alighieri, whose 700th birthday we celebrate this year, was the founder of Italian Poetry, but surely he was a man for all nations. His impact and stimulating direction upon the hearts, and minds, and consciences of so many in lands other than Italy has born evidence since his time. In our time, all Americans, and especially boys and girls, have evidence of Dante, his work, his times, and of people he influenced, in the books available to them.

The *Divine Comedy*, in which Dante immortalized Beatrice, is a very long poem and is Dante's vision of life after death. It is in three parts: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Dante himself called this work simply "The Comedy" because it proceeds from Hell toward Heaven, from the worse toward the better, a medieval idea of comedy. The word "divine" was added at a later date.

At the age of nine, Dante met his beloved, "divine" Beatrice, of whom he writes in his *Divine Comedy*

"Subduing me with light of smiling eyes.  
'Turn round and hearken', thus to me she said,  
'Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise'."

The love Dante had for Beatrice and the influence she had upon his life were to last his lifetime. The romances of Dante's times were highly chivalrous, and Dante's writings reflect this. If one reads the account of Beatrice and Dante's romance in *Italian Roundabout*, he will gain a greater understanding of Dante's love for Beatrice—and the kind of courting popular with the younger set of 13th century Italy (Romeo and Juliet, the world's most famous lovers, courted in similar manner, in Italy, about a century after Dante's time.)

Born in Florence, Italy, in 1265 of a respected family of the burgher class, Dante's own book *Vita Nuova* (New Life) provides an account of his early years. But since books such as *Vita Nuova* are not always readily available to young people, essential information about Dante's life can be obtained from DeWitt's *Illustrated Minute Biographies* (Grades 5-9) as well as Thomas' *Living Biographies of Great Poets* (Grades 9-12).

If Dante had written only *The Divine Comedy*, his legacy to Italy and to the world would still be monumental. However, through his pamphlet *De Monarchia*, (*The Monarchy*), he laid the

<sup>1</sup>Reprint of an article by Kathleen J. Gilligan which appeared in the March-April 1965 issue of *Staff Library Bulletin* published by the Bureau of Libraries, Board of Education of the City of New York.

foundation for the thinking of 20th century political theories and statesmen on world government.

The Italy of Dante's time was not a unified republic as it is today. But, in Dante's day, Italy was made up of city-states under the control of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Many of the emperors had to fight hard to uphold their authority because each of these cities made itself practically independent. As a citizen of Florence, one of these city-states, Dante took part in the turbulent political and military struggles which Italy was plunged into at the time. He achieved high office in Florence and was sent on a mission to the Pope at Rome in 1301.

Books like *A Picture History of Italy*, will provide readers from 6th grade to 9th grade with a brief but clear, illustrated account of this divided and distraught Italy. It will also show the hope and aspirations of so many, including Dante and Petrarch, for peace in Italy. (Petrarch is one of Italy's most famous writers and, not long after Dante's death, became poet laureate at Rome.) High school readers will find in Herbert Kubly's book, *Italy*, much information and many references to Dante and to this stormy period of Italian history.

After Dante's return from Rome, however, the victory of the party to which Dante was opposed resulted in his exile from Florence. He finally settled in Ravenna, where he died in 1321.

Ravenna, where Dante died, Florence, the city where he was born—these two places are brought alive for young people in books such as *A Young American Looks At Italy* (Grades 7-9) and *The First Book of Italy* (Grades 5-9). For students of junior and senior high school ages, Dante and the places he trod are made meaningful in books such as the *Italian Roundabout*, Winwar's *The Land of the Italian People*, and Kish's *Italy* (Life in Europe series).

Lines such as ". . . Be as a tower, that firmly set/Shakes not its top for any blast that blows," which appear in his *Divine Comedy*, will have more meaning for younger readers when they learn from *Italian Roundabout*, for example, that the Leaning Tower of Pisa is not the only leaning tower in Italy. There are two in Bologna, one of which leans some ten feet out of the perpendicular and was a tower Dante knew well.

Writers and other creative artists throughout the ages have drawn upon Dante Alighieri for inspiration and have been amply rewarded by the fruits of their inspiration. During Dante's time, fellow Florentines were directed and guided by him. He was the founder of Italian poetry, and father, also, of the Italian language as it is spoken today. The English essayist, Thomas Carlyle, described him as giving ". . . a voice to ten silent centuries." In *Lives of the Poets*,

of 67 to begin the study of Italian so that he could read the *Comedy* in its original form.

In Italy, Gabriel Rossetti devoted many of his early drawings and water colors to Dante's works. Three of his most famous illustrations are: Dante drawing an angel; Giotto painting a portrait of Dante; and "The Kiss," an illustration of the Paolo and Francesca story.

In France, a renewed artistic interest in Dante began with Ary Schiffer (1795-1858) with his illustration of Paolo and Francesca. Paul Delacroix (1799-1863) painted "Dante's Bark," which represents the boat carrying Virgil and Dante to the city of Dis in the Inferno. Of course, the best-known French illustrator of Dante's *Comedy* is Gustave Doré. His interpretations of the *Inferno* (1861) and *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (1868) have become the most popular illustrations of the poem.

Modern Germany's numerous illustrators of *The Divine Comedy* include J. A. Koch, Carstens, Cornelius, Fuhrich, Emler, Sturler, Overbeck, Feuerback, Veit, Rethel, Schuler, Bocklein, and Otto Greiner.

Among the American artists who have been inspired to illustrate *The Divine Comedy* are Watts, Holiday, Crane, Solomon, and Traquair.

Salvador Dali recently completed a series of graphic illustrations of scenes from the work.

### Suggested Activities

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Activities</i>
<b>Painting</b>	
Figures	Representations of: Paolo and Francesca ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto V)
Imaginary Themes	Impressions of: Satan ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto XXXIV) Minos ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto V)
Expression of Mood	Reactions to: "We paced along the lonely plain, as one who returns to his lost road, and till he reach it, seems to go in vain." ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto I)
Landscapes	Interpretation of: Garden of Eden, Terrestrial Paradise ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto XXVIII)
<b>Drawing</b>	
Imagery	Interpretation of: ". . . like a troop that hastes with loosened rein." ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto V)



- JARMAN, T. H. *Picture History of Italy*. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1962. (Grades 6-9)
- KEATING, KATE AND BERN. *Young Americans Look at Italy*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963. (Grade 7-9)
- KISH, GEORGE. *Italy*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: The Fideler Co., 1964. (Grades 5-8)
- KUBLY, HERBERT. *Life World Library: Italy*. New York: Time Inc., 1964. (High School)
- ROTHERY, AGNES. *Italian Roundabout*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1950. (Grades 7-9)
- THOMAS, HENRY AND DANA, LEE. *Living Biographies of Great Poets*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1959. (High School)
- TREVELYAN, JANET P. *Short History of the Italian People*. New York: Pitman Publishing Corp., 1956. (High School)
- UNTERMAYER, LOUIS. *Lives of the Poets*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1959 (High School)
- WINWAR, FRANCES. *Land of the Italian People*. Philadelphia, Pa.: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1951. (Grade 6)

A book talk, *From Dante to the Beatles: Teen-agers Yesterday and Today*, featuring titles which help throw light on the young people of Dante's time and those of our own, by Kathleen J. Gilligan, Supervisor, Bureau of Libraries, is available on tape through the Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Discussion of the life and accomplishments of Dante Alighieri can enrich and supplement the teaching of social studies on the secondary level. Particular reference can be made to Dante in world geography and world history. To the extent that certain aspects of Dante's career and ideas are universal, he may also be used in other social studies courses. (For background, teachers may consult Part I, Sections "Citizens of Florence," "Exile," and "De Monarchia.")

The two-column chart below indicates the curriculum topics in which references to Dante may be used as resource material for developing significant ideas, attitudes and concepts. The creative teacher may explore these possibilities and also add areas and topics of his own.

### *Facts and Ideas About Dante*

1. Dante was a famous Italian poet.

### *Suggested Curriculum Areas and Topics*

- Life and culture of the people of Italy
- Cultural heritage of peoples who settled in the United States

2. Dante lived in the late medieval period.
  - Medieval culture of the 13th and 14th centuries
3. Dante was sent to school to cultivate the art of "versifying."
  - The nature of education of the burgher nobility in the Middle Ages
  - The role of poetry and literature in the medieval curriculum
4. Dante lived in and was later exiled from the city-state of Florence.
  - The nature of government in the Italian Peninsula in the 13th and 14th centuries
  - Rivalry and warfare between city-states
  - Florence as a leading city-state
  - Medieval backgrounds of the Italian nation
  - The growth of towns and cities in the Middle Ages
5. Dante joined the Physicians and Apothecaries Guild in order to participate in public office.
  - The nature of medieval guilds
  - The role of guilds in regulating industry in medieval towns
  - The role of guilds in town government
  - A comparison of the guilds with present-day unions
6. Dante was born of a Guelph family. During his exile, Dante's political convictions underwent profound change, and he associated himself with Ghibelline leaders.
  - Guelphs vs. Ghibellines
  - Emperors vs. Popes
  - Holy Roman Empire
7. Dante was involved in factional disputes within Florence. (The Whites supported the independence of Florence against the Pope; the Blacks favored papal control of the city. Dante was sympathetic to the Whites. Victory of the Blacks forced Dante into exile on trumped-up charges of malfeasance in office.)
  - Factional rivalries in medieval towns
  - The nature of town government
  - The struggles for self-government against Popes and Emperors
  - The struggle for separation of church and state

8. Dante participated actively in public office. In the course of his political life he was a member of the Council of the People and the Council of the Hundred. He also served as Florentine ambassador to neighboring cities and to Pope Boniface of Rome.
  - The nature of town government in medieval Florence
  - Relationships of Italian cities to the Popes, the Emperors and to one another in the Middle Ages
9. Dante's literary works and other writings reflected the political developments of his time. *To The Princes and Peoples of Italy* was an appeal for welcoming Henry VII into Florence; *De Monarchia* stressed the need for a universal peaceful empire under the rule of a Roman Emperor; *Letters to Italian Cardinals* asked for the election of an Italian Pope and the end of the papal exile in Avignon (the "Babylonian Captivity").
  - Italy in the late Middle Ages
  - Peace movements
  - Nationalism
  - Church history in the Middle Ages
10. Dante's travels in exile (Ravenna, Verona and elsewhere) brought him into contact with the hardships and depravity of the times. His *Divine Comedy* presents a contrast between a divinely ordained political and social order as contrasted to the existing chaotic one. He thought of himself as a poet of justice in this and the next life.
  - Economic, social, religious and political conditions in Italy during the Middle Ages
11. Dante is in part a representative of medieval culture. His early works made use of medieval love poetry (courtly love). His
  - European culture in the Middle Ages

*Divine Comedy* shows basic concern for spiritual forces and the hereafter. Some of his works are written in the classical Latin language. In many ways Dante summed up the Middle Ages. The *Divine Comedy* is a thoroughly didactic Christian epic. Dante was considered by contemporaries as a dreamer of vanished utopias and a pan-Christian empire.

12. Dante contributed to the growth of modern languages. In *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he develops a new theory for the need of an Italian language. His *Divine Comedy*, one of the major literary works of all time, is written in Italian. He is the first important literary figure to write in Italian.
  - Rise of medieval vernaculars
  - Rise of modern languages
  - Rise of universities
  - Fate of the "classics"
13. The European Renaissance is indebted to Dante for many reasons. He created a clear, concise modern language as a tool of expression. His writings showed tremendous versatility and elan. He himself was a versatile "Renaissance Man,"—poet, diplomat, courtier, politician, soldier, lover. As a person, Dante displayed the "magnificent arrogance" of an individualist. He has been called "the first modern man."
  - The Renaissance
  - Individualism
  - Development of modern languages
14. Dante's influence extends far beyond his times. He is often considered a spiritual forerunner of Luther. (The Inquisition objected to a number of his
  - Reformation
  - Romanticism
  - Modern literature

writings.) He became one of the literary gods of the 19th century Romanticists along with Shakespeare. In England, Germany, France and the United States, figures such as Lord Byron, Shelley, Hunt, Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Lowell, Longfellow and Heine paid homage to him. Painters such as Reynolds, Blake, Doré and Ingres were influenced by his works. In contemporary times, Dante has become a spiritual force for such writers as Stefan George and T. S. Eliot.

#### *Suggested Activities*

1. Discussion of thought-provoking themes:
  - How does Dante sum up a number of aspects of medieval culture?
  - How does Dante illustrate man's creativeness in the Renaissance?
  - How do Dante's writing show the influence of the Church in the Middle Ages?
  - Why has Dante been referred to as a Renaissance man?
  - What does Dante's life tell us about the government of the Italian city-states of the later Middle Ages?
  - What does the world owe Dante today?
2. Individual or committee reports on the life and works of Dante:
 

Dante, the Student	Dante, the Politician
Dante, the Soldier	Dante, the Writer
Dante, the Humanitarian	Dante, the Poet
Dante, the Universal Man	Dante, the Renaissance Man
3. A debate or panel discussion devoted to the topic: "Does Dante Belong to the Middle Ages or to the Renaissance?"
4. For homework or extra credit, pupils may be asked to draw a map of Italy in Dante's time, showing political subdivisions, or noting the cities in which Dante lived before and during his exile.
5. The creating of a one-page newspaper illustrating events which occurred at the time that the *Divine Comedy* or *De Monarchia* was completed.
6. Special reports on Italian cities during the Renaissance; e.g., Florence or Venice.



7. In geography classes, pupils may bring in attractive pictures of Italy or work on travel posters geared to such titles as: "Come to Italy, Land of Dante" and "Florence in Dante's Era."
8. A written paper or a discussion comparing a day in a pupil's life in Italy in 1265 with a day in the life of a pupil in 1965.
9. A discussion on the validity of nominating Dante to a 13th-century Hall of Fame.
10. Imaginary conversations with Dante in which pupils ask for and receive his opinions on issues with which he was conversant; e.g., politics, government, poetry, church and state relations, language, etc.
11. A discussion of the role of Dante in the history of peace movements, struggles for national independence, the rise of individualism, in social studies and Problems of Democracy classes.
12. A class discussion of the historical episodes and setting which might be used as background for a motion picture or play version of the life of Dante.
13. A class bulletin board to show pictorially or graphically the relationship of Dante to the historical movements of his times.

1774/1789

## MATHEMATICS

Dante's numerous references to mathematics and mathematicians have directed scholars' attention to his competence as a mathematician.

For many centuries commentators of the *Comedy*, Boccaccio and Galileo among them, have noted Dante's knowledge of the subject. It is impossible, however, to form a correct estimate of the extent of this knowledge without an understanding of the mathematics available to the learned of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

The mathematics taught in Dante's day was based on the materials drawn mainly from two books by Boethius (c. 500 A.D.), who was referred

to as "the last of the Romans." Although Boethius may have studied the Greek manuscripts on geometry by Euclid and on arithmetic by Nichomachus, his own writings present merely an outline of the works of these two great mathematicians. It is certain that Dante knew of the works of Boethius and admired him enough to place him, along with other great *sapienti*, to the least punitive region of the Inferno, Limbo. Limbo, of course, was the circle reserved for virtuous pagans, who had not been baptized and were, therefore, doomed to spend eternity in a state of hopeless longing.

During his period of exile, Dante is known to have sojourned in many of the university towns of northern Italy and to have studied at the University of Paris. It can be assumed that he studied the translations of Arabic versions of Euclid's "Elements of Geometry." Dante also gives evidence of having studied, with understanding, a work of the Italian mathematician, Campanus, on the quadrature of the circle, i.e., the construction, with straight edge and compasses only, of a square which is exactly equal to a circle. This problem has plagued mathematicians for more than two thousand years and has been proved impossible of solution only in the last century.

Dante's failure to take cognizance of the revolution that was taking place in mathematics in his day has puzzled many of his admirers. The 13th century "modernization" of mathematics had its beginnings in the "Liber Abaci" (1202) of Leonardo of Pisa (known also as Fibonacci). The first major work on arithmetic by a European, this book made use of the Hindu-Arabic system of numeration and was not merely a translation of an Arabic work. It was the conciseness of the decimal system of numeration which motivated the great advances in mathematics during the Renaissance. Fibonacci's great book on the solution of equations had a powerful influence on the later development of symbolic algebra. Dante's failure to mention this "greatest European mathematician of the Middle Ages" led to the speculation that Dante's hatred of Pisa, the city of infamy, "*viturpio delle gente*," may have been responsible for his neglect of as famous a Pisan as Fibonacci. Or it might result from the fact that Fibonacci was a protégé of the famous mathematician and astrologer, Duns Scotus (Michael Scott), whom Dante consigned to the eighth circle of the Inferno. In this region, the mathematician shared the company of all those who practiced the "black art," i.e., magic, fortunetelling, and other forms of fraud.

Dante's references to geometry showed that he had a complete grasp of the deductive method of reasoning that is characteristic of Euclid's geometry. In this connection, in Book I, Chapter 1 of the *De Monarchia* he says, "Of what use is it to prove again a theorem that Euclid has once demonstrated?" In this same book, Dante makes a very subtle comment to

the effect that geometers confuse the existence of a square exactly equal to a circle with the problem of finding the square by construction. Dante notes that such a square exists, but the fact has nothing to do with the construction problem. He describes this sense of frustration in Canto XXXIII of the *Paradiso*:

As the geometrician, who endeavors  
To square the circle, and discovers not,  
By taking thought, the principle he wants. . . .  
(Translated by Longfellow)

In referring to a fact that is the inexorable consequence of a certain hypothesis, he uses the analogy of the geometric conclusion that a triangle cannot have two obtuse angles:

"that two obtuse angles may not find room in one triangle. . . ."  
(Translated by Carlyle)

and that a triangle inscribed in a semicircle must have a right angle:  
"whether in a semicircle can be constructed a triangle that shall  
have no right angle." (*Paradiso*, Canto XIII)

(Translated by Carlyle)

It would be rather strange if number mysticism were absent from Dante's writings. For Dante, the significant numbers were 3, multiples of 3 such as 9 and 33, the number 7 and the number 10. For example, the *Commedia* is composed of 3 canticles, each containing 33 cantos.

While it cannot be said that Dante was a creative mathematician, he was conversant with the mathematics of his era. Moreover, mathematicians will be forever indebted to him for the respect he accorded their subject.

#### *Suggested Activities*

1. Visit the "Special Collection," Columbia University Library to see 15th century manuscript edition of the Campanus "Euclid."
2. Look up medieval methods of doing arithmetic in these and any other sources you find:

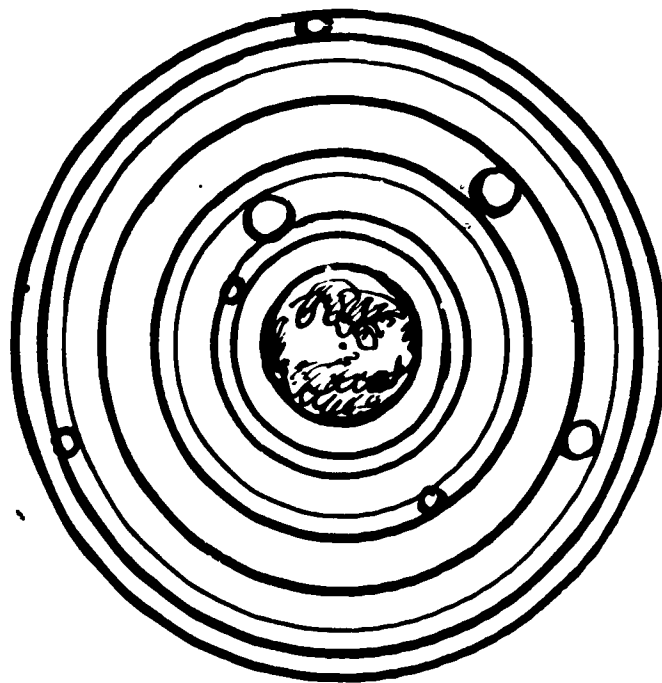
BAKST, AARON. *Mathematics — Its Magic and Mastery*. Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, 1941.

EVES, H. *Introduction to the History of Mathematics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1964.

SMITH, D. E. *History of Mathematics, Vol. I, II*. New York: Dover Press, 1963.

SMITH, D. E. "Number Games and Number Rhymes." *Teachers College Record*; Vol. 13, No. 5. November, 1912.

(The whole issue, edited by David Eugene Smith, is devoted to articles by Professor Smith and students dealing with number games and rhymes.)



## ASTRONOMY

Dante was fascinated by the beauty of the skies. His desire to understand the universe impelled him to make a deep study of astrology and astronomy. However, during his era many of his learned contemporaries concerned themselves with astronomy and astrology for a different reason. They believed that the movements of the heavenly bodies controlled man's destinies on earth. Moreover, people of the medieval world relied on the movements of these same heavenly bodies to determine time and direction.

To acquaint himself with all the astronomical data available, Dante had to depend on the writings of famous men of science and on his conversations with contemporary mathematicians and scholars. Dante knew well the written works of the greatest astrologer of the 13th century Duns Scotus (Michael Scott). Yet the poet looked askance at people who tried to foretell the future, a practice which was also condemned by the Church. Dante therefore placed all astrologers with soothsayers in the *Inferno*, Canto XX. In this same canto he refers to Michael Scott as:

"That other, round of loins  
So slender of his shape, was Michael Scott,  
Practiced in every sleight of magic wile."

(Translated by H. Cary)

Dante's greatest authority on astronomy, of course, was Ptolemy, whose theories were universally acknowledged at the time. However, it is doubtful that Dante had access to Ptolemy's *Almagest*. This was a compendium of all that was known about the movements and the nature of the heavenly bodies. According to Ptolemy, the earth was a stationary globe at the center of the universe. The seven planets which revolved around the earth and the stars, which made up the eighth planet, were believed to be set in crystalline transparent spheres. Dante's many astronomical allusions indicate that he was well acquainted with the *Elementa Astronomica* by the Arab astronomer, Alfraganus. Dante also owes his theories on cosmic physics and meteorology to Aristotle.

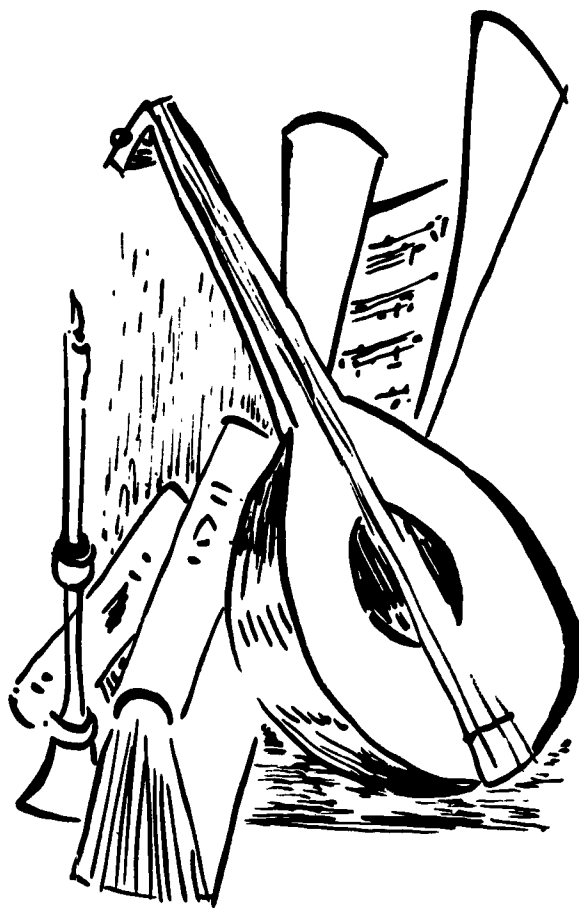
Dante's background material in astronomy was derived from a variety of sources: classical writers such as Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Plato; the Greek philosophers Thales, Pythagoras, Dionysius and Socrates; certain Christian writers, St. Augustine, Peter Lombard, Orasius, Thomas Aquinas and Albert of Cologne; and his Italian contemporaries, Brunetto Latini, his teacher, Cecco d'Ascoli of Bologna, and Ristoro d'Arezzo, a learned monk.

It would be interesting indeed for science students today to contrast our ever advancing body of astronomical knowledge with the basic beliefs of Dante's day.

1. The earth is motionless at the center of the universe.
2. The earth is a massive globe having a circumference of 20,400 miles.
3. The northern hemisphere is inhabited, while the southern hemisphere contains only oceans.
4. Above the skies is the region of pure fire, where hot, dry vapors rise and burst into flame.
5. There were celestial spheres surrounding the earth and extending to the realm of the stars.
6. The distance from the earth to the moon is  $64\frac{1}{6}$  times the radius of the earth.
7. The smallest heavenly body, Mercury, is 232 miles in diameter.
8. The sun is the chief measure of time on the earth.
9. The sun, moon and planets influence every event on earth.



## MUSIC



In the time of Dante, music was a required part of the educational curriculum, for it was considered to be one of the seven liberal arts. Music was considered as part of mathematics, and thus was included in the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music) and not in the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic.) Dante, an educated man, therefore had some training as well as some experience in music. His writings bear this out.

Until the fourteenth century, the musical development in Italy had been in the area of church music having Latin words. During the thirteenth century, however, many troubadours from Provence (France) had migrated to Italy, where they traveled extensively and sang their songs in their own vernacular. In the fourteenth century, the troubadour influence was felt in the area of music with the flourishing of Italian secular composition.

Various museums of the world treasure the manuscripts of two- and three-part compositions and many instrumental dances of this epoch. These compositions are not copies of the French style. Rather they show the development of an original Italian style, decidedly more florid than that of France.

In the period of secular development, Italian composers sought lyrics for their words. It is interesting to note that only one setting of Dantean verse was made during his lifetime. It is the prayer of St. Bernard to the

Virgin in the *Paradiso*. The original setting has been found in a codex in Belluno in northeast Italy.

It is interesting that the lyrics of Petrarch surpassed any Dantean verse in popularity in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dante's verse was not used, according to Bembo's *Treatise on the Italian Language* (1525), because the poet used language that was too strong and too dissonant in contrast to Petrarch's softer words.

In 1562, some 240 years after Dante's death, the poignant fragment from the *Inferno*, Canto III, verses 22-27, was scored for three parts by Giovanni Battista Montonaro. In the next sixteen years, the rich, suggestive harmony inspired by the verses was captured by six composers: Luzzasco Luzzaschi, Giulio Renaldi, Giovanni Battista Mosto, Domenico Micheli, Francesco Suriano and Pietro Vinci. One of these settings, Luzzaschi's, may be found in the *Golden Age of the Madrigal*, a G. Schirmer publication.

The verses used for the fragment are among the most descriptive in the *Inferno*:

Here sighing, and here crying, and loud railing  
Smote on the starless air, with lamentation,  
So that at first I wept to hear such wailing.

Tongues mixed and mingled, horrible execration,  
Shrill shrieks, hoarse groans, fierce yells and hideous blether  
And clapping of hands thereto without cessation,

Made tumult through the timeless night, that hither  
And thither drives in dizzying circles sped,  
As whirlwind whips the spinning sands together.

In the fifth Canto of the "Inferno," Dante has placed Minos, an ancient king of Crete familiar in the works of Homer and Virgil. Minos stands as a demon-judge of the region of the damned. Minos tries to dissuade Dante from his purpose of visiting the three realms of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. This episode was set to music by Lodovico Balbi in 1586.

An interesting episode in music history is associated with the setting of the lament of Count Ugolino in Canto XXXIII. This sharp, taut story is one of the most dramatic in all of Dante's works. The setting, composed for tenor voice and a group of viols, was the work of Vincenzo Galilei, father of the great physicist Galileo. Unfortunately, the composition has been lost.

The next settings of works related to Dante's literary creation occurred only in the nineteenth century among three contemporaries, Franz Liszt, Pëtr Ilich Tchaikovsky and Giuseppe Verdi. The symphonic poem, *Dante*, was composed by Liszt after the *Divine Comedy*: it is a work for orchestra and women's chorus. Tchaikovsky also wrote a symphonic poem, "Francesca da Rimini," inspired by the tragic heroine of the fifth Canto of the "Inferno."

Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces* were heard for the first time in Paris in April, 1898. The famous house of Ricordi published this collection, which had been completed in 1897. These four pieces include *Ave Maria*, *Stabat Mater*, *Laudi alla Vergine Maria* and *Te Deum*. Adapted from St. Bernard's invocation to the Virgin Mary, (*Paradiso*: Canto XXXIII, the *Laudi* aroused great enthusiasm. The second performance of these works occurred at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Italian Constitution at the Turin Exposition in May, 1898. One year later at the Scala in Milan the third performance was given. It is interesting to note that this performance had a direct contact with our country and particularly with our city. For the new director of the Scala was then Giulio Gatti-Casazza, later director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and the conductor, Arturo Toscanini, who was to become conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

In the following years, the "Laudi" was sung in many European cities. However, it was not heard in America until the Amato Opera Showcase Theatre presented three of the "Four Sacred Pieces" in the Concerti in Camera Series during December, 1964. The "Laudi" was included. On Thursday evening, January 21, 1965, the Poetry Society of America, in a program honoring Dante, presented the "Laudi" at the Hotel Astor.

In the twentieth century, Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944) composed the opera, "Francesca da Rimini," which was produced at Turin on February 19, 1914 and at the Metropolitan Opera House on December 22, 1916. It has had no further hearing in the United States.

Dante's influence as an inspiration toward composition is not extensive quantitatively but very satisfying, qualitatively. It will be interesting to see whether or not the seventh centennial celebration of Dante's birth inspires further musical settings of his words.

### **Suggested Activities for Music Classes**

#### ***Dante and the Troubadours***

1. A small committee will plan research and a brief report on the troubadours.
2. An art committee will prepare slides of troubadours and trouvères.
3. Interested pupils will draw a map of France and Italy showing the wanderings of the troubadours.
4. Other interested pupils might read about the instruments of the troubadours, the harps and the lutes, and perhaps make models of such instruments.
5. Dante meets three troubadours in the *Divine Comedy*: Bertran de Born (died 1215)—*Inferno*, Canto XXVIII; Sordello (died after 1269)—*Purgatorio*, Canto VI, VII, VIII, IX; and Folquet (also known as Folco) of Marseilles (died 1231)—*Paradiso*, Canto IX.

Interested students might wish to look up these troubadours to ascertain if any of their works are extant. The performance of some of these pieces could be arranged for an assembly program.

6. The same type of activity might be used in connection with Arnaut Daniel of Provence (died 1199), whom Dante encounters in Canto XXVI of the *Purgatorio*; and Casella, of Canto II of the *Purgatorio*. (Dante in this meeting asks Casella to sing. He does so.)

#### *The Music of Dante's Times*

Are any compositions available? A committee of students could plan for the presentation of some of them in an assembly program.

#### *Musical Settings of Dante's Works*

Music, with narration, of the Francesca da Rimini episode, or of the "Laudi."

#### *Original Compositions by More Creative Pupils*

Select a passage in any of the cantos. Discuss elements of the setting. Form a committee to prepare the setting. *Suggestions: Paradiso*, Canto I,—the musical contest between Marsyas and Apollo; or *Paradiso*, Canto XX, David, "the greatest singer of the Greatest God," carrying the Ark from city to city.

### **Recordings Available Middle Ages and Renaissance**

#### *Medieval Court and the Countryside*

French, English, Italian and Spanish sources Decca LP 9400

#### *The Play of Daniel*

12 Century musical drama, French DL 9402 DL 79402

#### *Medieval English Carols and Italian Dances*

DL 9418 DL 79418

#### *History of Music in Sound Vol. 2*

Early Medieval Music up to 1300 RCA Victor LM 6015

#### *History of Music in Sound Vol. 3*

Ars Nova and the Renaissance LM RCA Victor LM 6016

### **Liszt**

#### *Dante Symphony*

SPA records	44 Vienna Philharmonic and Chorus
Westminster	XWN 18971 and 14132—Budapest Philharmonic and Choir

*Dante Sonata for Piano* from "Italia" (#7)

London CS 6106

Peter Katin

Victor ML 20201

Pietro Spada

**Puccini**

*Gianni Schicchi*

opera in one act

Angel FSX

35473

London A

4153

London OSA

1133

**Tchaikovsky**

*Francesca da Rimini*

symphonic poem

Angel 35980

Philharmonia

Angel 35621

Royal Philharmonic

Columbia ML5658

New York Philharmonic

Deutsche Grammaphon Gesellschaft

LPLM19225 Lamoureux Orchestra

Mercury MG50201

Minneapolis Symphony

Victor LM2043

Boston Symphony

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NOTE: A tape of "Laudi alla Vergine Maria" was prepared by WNYC when this composition was performed at a program presented by the Poetry Society of America, in honor of Dante, on January 21, 1965, at the Hotel Astor. A copy of the tape may be obtained from Ruth M. Shafer, Supervisor of Music, of the Board of Education.

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**DANCE**

The dance was a minor yet graceful contribution in a golden age of the arts, the time of Dante. The respectability of dancing as an art form had been lessened by the outspoken disapproval of the Church. This was a reaction to the wild excesses of some of the natural folk development and to the extremes of immorality in the last days of Roman Classical presentations. This is not to say, however, that dancing did not have its place both in the life of the time and in the work of the poet.

Since dancing universally is a natural expression of human emotion, it is not surprising to find dancing in the life of 13th century Italy. When Dante illuminates a thought or clarifies a picture through the imagery of the dance, it is certain that he had seen and probably participated in the dance described. Only one who had participated in the dance could so



freely detail the movements of court ballets. Dante does this in the *Paradiso*, Canto XVIII, lines 73-81:

And even as birds, rising from river-banks,  
As if in glad thanksgiving for their food  
Make of themselves now long, now serried ranks,  
So holy creatures there within those lights,  
Singing, flew to and fro, and made themselves  
Now "D", now "I", now "L" in figured flights.  
They moved, singing to their own measure till  
One of these characters they had become  
Then for a little halted and were still.

These verses describe a part of an intricate, geometric-lettered dance pattern of a type which Dante must have seen many times. Not always was his dance imagery so intricate. Often he alludes to the simple round or rondeau or carole of the folk dance, such as he might have seen or in which he might have participated at a seasonal or saint's festival:

Even so there encircled us about  
Those garlands twain of sempiternal roses,  
And those within so answered those without.  
After the dance and the high festival  
Of song with song and of that flaming forth  
Of light with light serene and tender, all  
At once, of one accord, were hushed and still.

*Paradiso*, XII, 19-25

Again in the *Paradiso*, Canto XIII, lines 10-21:

And he will have some shadow of discerning  
Of the real sign, and of the double dance  
That round about you, where I was, was turning . . .

Another allusion occurs again in the *Paradiso*, Canto XIV, lines 19-24:

Even as dancers in a round by grace  
Of new access of joy, from time to time  
Lift up their voices and requicken pace,  
So at her prompt and reverent prayer, new pleasure  
Those holy circles in their turning showed,  
And in the wonder of their tuneful measure.

Dante's description in Canto XII, lines 4-6 of the *Paradiso* might very well be the memory of an experience in the *chansons de danse* of Provence, which were familiar to the people of Italy.

And ere it turned a full circle, a new throng  
Within a second circle closed it round  
And motion matched with motion, song with song.

That Dante was familiar with the graceful movement of the court dance is evident in *Purgatorio*, Canto XXVIII, lines 52-56:

And as a lady turns when she dances,  
With feet close to the ground and to each other,  
And one before the other scarce advances  
Upon the yellow and vermillion flowers  
She turned herself to me . . .

It is no wonder, then, that Dante's *Paradiso* resounds with song and dance, and as Armstrong says,

The spirit dancers throng the heavens  
Too supersensuous for historical earthly use.

In Dante's conception, the very heavenly bodies themselves are in an eternal cosmic dance in concentric circles about the great Central Reality.

#### **Dance in a Unit of Study**

For this seventh centennial year, the implication is clear that in any unit on Dante, the dance may contribute a meaningful, enjoyable and interesting correlation.

#### **Type of Dance Prevalent in 13th - 14th Centuries**

1. Dance in the Theatre—confined almost exclusively to the Devil's Mime in miracle and mystery plays or to the role of Salome:

Comic relief in serious religious plays

Interludes — devils or vices amused spectators before or after the show.

2. Folk Rites:

Dramatic ritual games or seasonal dances

Individual inventions of jongleurs and troubadours who went from castle to castle to entertain

"The Dance of Death" — as depicted on ivory carvings of 12th century in Florentine National Museum

Dancing mania in time of plague, or in penance for excessive raucous behavior in dancing in churchyard. (Compare with modern dance marathon.)

Dance similar to the Tarantella (vs. bite of the tarantula) — 3 girls with tambourine and castenets

Carole—at fairs, festivals and saints' days (40 each year):

Processional — right to left marching steps with strong, accented beat on third beat of measure

Beating one foot against the other

Chansons de danse (dancing songs)

Characteristic step — an accentual tap on every third beat; striking or stamping the foot.

"Ridda" — turn or chain thought (Derived from "threshing," concept which still survives in the Italian folk dance, *Trescone*.)

3. Dancing as part of chivalric amenities:

Dancing in pairs not popular till 15th century

Round, with the knight leading the lady in either hand

Measure similar to a polonaise — alternate marked beat; gentle movement.

*Note:* For elementary school participation in a dance unit, the carole and chivalric dancing would be the most suitable.

There is always, on all grade levels, the possibility of original creative interpretation of any of the imaginative scenes so vividly described by Dante, as in *Paradiso*, Canto XXIV, lines 13-18:

As wheels within a clock-work's harmony  
So turn that unto him who watches them  
The first seems quiet, and the last to fly,  
Those choirs, to different measures dancing, so  
Gave me thereby to gauge their affluence  
According as their pace was fast or slow.

4. The following references to dancing in *The Divine Comedy* might be suggested to students as a challenge to original development of their theme:

The lowly Psalmist there came ushering  
The blessed vessel, dancing with loins girt  
And in the act was more and less than king.

*Purgatorio*, X, 64-67

Then forth she drew me, and so cleansed led  
Within the dance of the four beauteous ones;

*Purgatorio*, XXXI, 103-104

Showing themselves of blessed circumstance  
In bearing, forward came the other three,  
Treading the angelic measure of their dance.

*Purgatorio*, XXXI, lines 130-133

To angels' music measured we our gait.

*Purgatorio*, XXXII, line 33

Revolving to the music of its speech  
I saw the singing spirit, over whom  
Each of a double glory doubles each,  
It and the others moved then to their dance  
And veiled themselves, like swiftly flying sparks  
In distance.

*Paradiso*, VII, lines 4-8

## ART



Many artists of the Renaissance were influenced by *The Divine Comedy*: Giotto, Signorelli, Orcagna, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Taddeo Gaddi, Tintoretto, Bartoli, Raphael, and Michelangelo. Giotto, a friend and contemporary of the poet, painted a head of the youthful Dante on the wall of the Bargello of Florence. Sandro Botticelli was the first artist to illustrate *The Divine Comedy* with his more than one hundred illustrations. These can still be seen in Berlin and the Vatican. Michelangelo showed strong traces of Dantean influence in his "Last Judgment" at the Sistine Chapel. Raphael introduced imaginary portraits of Dante as well as characters from his works in "Parnassus," "Dispute," and other paintings.

Illustrations of the *Comedy* can also be found in the illuminated manuscripts of the 14th and 15th centuries, many of which were executed by cloistered monks. The first printed illustrations of *The Divine Comedy*, however, began with the publication of Cristoforo Landini of a score of copper plates engraved by Baldini.

After the Renaissance, little evidence of Dante's influence on artists and craftsmen was apparent until the end of the 18th century, except for the work of Stradamus, who imitated Michelangelo, and Frederigo Zuccaro, who produced eighty-seven pages of Dante drawings. It is interesting to note that Zuccaro was the first artist to concentrate on the landscape background in illustrating the *Comedy*.

Interest in Dante was revived in England with the designs of Flaxman and William Blake. Flaxman, known as a "sculptor's draughtsman," produced drawings with three-dimensional qualities. After having worked on one hundred and two illustrations of Dante's *Comedy*, Blake decided at the age

of 67 to begin the study of Italian so that he could read the *Comedy* in its original form.

In Italy, Gabriel Rossetti devoted many of his early drawings and water colors to Dante's works. Three of his most famous illustrations are: Dante drawing an angel; Giotto painting a portrait of Dante; and "The Kiss," an illustration of the Paolo and Francesca story.

In France, a renewed artistic interest in Dante began with Ary Schiffer (1795-1858) with his illustration of Paolo and Francesca. Paul Delacroix (1799-1863) painted "Dante's Bark," which represents the boat carrying Virgil and Dante to the city of Dis in the Inferno. Of course, the best-known French illustrator of Dante's *Comedy* is Gustave Doré. His interpretations of the *Inferno* (1861) and *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (1868) have become the most popular illustrations of the poem.

Modern Germany's numerous illustrators of *The Divine Comedy* include J. A. Koch, Carstens, Cornelius, Fuhrich, Emler, Sturler, Overbeck, Feuerback, Veit, Rethel, Schuler, Bocklein, and Otto Greiner.

Among the American artists who have been inspired to illustrate *The Divine Comedy* are Watts, Holiday, Crane, Solomon, and Traquair.

Salvador Dali recently completed a series of graphic illustrations of scenes from the work.

### Suggested Activities

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Activities</i>
<b>Painting</b>	
Figures	Representations of: Paolo and Francesca ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto V)
Imaginary Themes	Impressions of: Satan ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto XXXIV) Minos ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto V)
Expression of Mood	Reactions to: "We paced along the lonely plain, as one who returns to his lost road, and till he reach it, seems to go in vain." ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto I)
Landscapes	Interpretation of: Garden of Eden, Terrestrial Paradise ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto XXVIII)
<b>Drawing</b>	
Imagery	Interpretation of: ". . . like a troop that hastes with loosened rein." ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto V)



Expressing ideas	Reactions to: In Canto II of <i>Purgatorio</i> , Dante embraces his friend, Casella, but only clasps an empty shadow.
People	Representations of: Dante, Virgil, Beatrice
<i>Clay Modeling</i>	
Animal Forms	Interpretation of animals used as symbols: leopard — luxury, envy; lion — pride; she-wolf — avarice ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto I)
Mythological Forms	Interpretations of: Geryon, symbol of the fraudulent ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto XVI) Centaurs, symbol of human brutality ( <i>Inferno</i> , Canto XII)
<i>Crafts</i>	
Leather	Construction of book marks with Florentine designs
Cloth	Study of the use of medieval banners: use in churches, in the Crusades, to identify political groups Construction of banners to commemorate Dante's Seventh Centennial
Puppetry	Construction of puppets to represent: Dante, Virgil, Beatrice
<i>Lettering and Poster-Designing</i>	Designs of book covers for a biography of Dante Poster contest to commemorate Dante's (Seventh Centennial)
<i>Color and Design</i>	
Costume Designs	Research study of costumes of the 12th and 13th centuries to learn about: Head coverings—hoods and mantles Use of fabric—brocades, velvet Fabric dyes—scarlet, deep green, blue, purple Impression of costume worn by Beatrice when she appears to Dante ( <i>Purgatorio</i> , Canto XXX) Reproducing costumes worn by some of the Crusaders
<i>Forms in Space</i>	
Three-Dimensional Design	Drawing and/or paper sculpture of the celestial spheres in <i>Paradiso</i>

### ***Theatre Design***

Creating backdrops      Stage set for the Scene in a dark forest of Canto  
I of the *Inferno*

### ***Advertising Arts***

Planning a Display      Planning a display of:  
1. Costumes of the Middle Ages  
2. Musical instruments of the Troubadors

Planning an Exhibit      Preparing a collection of:  
1. Students' illustrations of the *Comedy*  
2. Paintings of moods suggested by Dante's  
*Purgatorio*  
3. Newspaper clippings about Dante Alighieri  
in the News—1965

### ***Industrial Design***

Study of the transition of function and design  
of medieval and modern musical instruments  
(lute-mandolin)

### ***Architecture***

Designing a chart showing changes in domestic  
architecture in the 12th and 13th centuries

### ***Suggested Trips***

Cloisters  
World's Fair, Vatican Pavilion  
Institute of Italian Culture  
Casa Italiana, Columbia University  
Morgan Library

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## **GUIDANCE**

*The Divine Comedy* is an allegorical poem which, according to its author, tells a good story about "Man, as by good or ill deserts, in the exercise of his free choice, becomes liable to rewarding or punishing justice."

To understand the poem, one should know something of Dante's political, theological and personal background. The poet used the *Comedy* to protest the political strife rampant in Europe and in his beloved Florence. He also protested against the Papacy in its desire for temporal power while disregarding the important role of spiritual guide. The poem reflects Dante's bitterness and suffering during his exile from Florence. Even though the story centers around characters who actually lived during Dante's era and relates events of their lives, the moral lessons which the poem teaches are vital to all men of every age.

In the allegory, Dante represents all mankind. He is the image of every sinner, while his journey represents the pilgrimage every soul must make

from the dark Solitary Wood, or confusion and bewilderment of life, in Canto I of the *Inferno*, to the joy of eternal happiness in *Paradiso*. Paradise, however, can only be achieved through the proper exercise of free will.

Hell, or the image of evil, is the place to which lost souls go after death. While alive, these sinners could not discipline their baser instincts, but permitted themselves to be ruled by them. The gluttonous, the avaricious, and the violent, for example, were not so much driven by external evil forces as that they yielded to a base inner force which took complete and absolute possession of them. Their torments are the result of their unwillingness to repent and to change. Now, there is no hope for them; they will continue to follow in Hell the pursuits which they so blindly followed in life.

Purgatory represents repentance. The sinners there have a hope for eventual redemption because they have a desire to mend their evil ways. Their sincere remorse gives them the fortitude to accept the punishment and pain that inevitably accompanies the changing of their ways. They possess the hope to attain a perfect state in Heaven. Thus, the individual who wishes to be in harmony with the universe must be able to recognize his imperfections, must have a sincere desire to change, and finally, must possess the inner strength to keep at his task until he attains success.

Paradise represents the soul in a state of grace. The souls who have repented and who have expiated their sins in Purgatory finally attain their just reward in eternal happiness.

The suggested topics for discussion which follow are but a few which the teacher may use in her guidance classes. The pertinent canto of the *Divine Comedy* will enrich and motivate the lesson taught. A sample guidance lesson has also been included in this section.

#### *Suggested Topics for Class Discussion*

1. Do I have any bad habits that I should like to change?
2. Am I tolerant of those who differ from me?
3. When I have done something I know is wrong, what can I do about it?
4. Am I always fair with others?
5. What are some of the ways that I can help others?
6. When do virtues cease to be virtues and become faults?
7. Do I sometimes procrastinate when I have a job to do? How can this hurt others?
8. How important is the well-being of others to me? (classmates, family, community, country).
9. Do I rule my emotions or do my emotions rule me?

### Sample Lesson

#### Aim:

To acquaint the students with the concept of "free will" and its implications in everyday life.

#### Motivation:

The teacher introduces the lesson with the following questions for discussion:

1. Think of any serious or important situation in which you had to make a decision.
2. How do you know that you made the right decision?
3. Did anyone influence your decision?
4. Were you forced to accept another's suggestion?
5. What does "free will" mean to you?

#### Development:

1. The teacher announces to the class that they are going to study Dante's concept of "free will."
2. Background information for the teacher:  
In Canto XVI of *Purgatorio* Dante reaches the Ledge of the Wrathful where the penitents are blinded by a dense rolling smoke. One of them is speaking to Dante and explains that free will is God's gift to man. The world goes astray because man refuses to exercise this gift with discretion, but deliberately chooses evil leadership.
3. The teacher distributes verses 65-84 from Canto XVI of Dante's *Purgatory*, as translated by J. A. Carlyle, Thomas Okey and P. S. Wicksteed.

" . . . Brother the world is blind, and verily thou comest from it.  
Ye who are living refer every cause up to the  
heavens alone, even as if they swept all with  
them of necessity.

Were it thus, Freewill in you would be destroyed,  
and it were not just to have joy for good and  
mourning for evil.

The heavens set your impulses in motion; I say  
not all, but suppose I said it, a light is given  
you to know good and evil,

and Freewill, which, if it enure the strain in its  
first battlings with the heavens, at length gains  
the whole victory, if it be well nurtured.

Ye lie subject, in your freedom, to a greater  
power and to a better nature; and creates  
in you *mind* which the heavens have not in  
their charge. . . ."

4. The teacher reads the excerpt aloud and then asks the following questions:

- What is Dante trying to teach us?
- Why should we choose what is “good” or “right”?
- What is the basic difference between “will” and “reason”?
- What faculty guides our conscience to a definite distinction between “right” and “wrong”?
- Is this the same faculty that guides us to a definite law for the guidance of our conduct?
- If man is, from a biological viewpoint, an animal, are all animals endowed with “free will” or “reason”?
- Is man, then, the highest type of animal?
- Why should we reason?
- Does “reason” help us to become better people and to appreciate (respect) moral values as well as ethical obligations toward one another?
- Does “will” refer to our senses and “reason” to our mind?

*Summary:*

The teacher asks the class what it has learned about the “free will” and writes the answers in the form of a chart:

- Man has an inborn power. He can choose “good” or “evil.”
- Man’s mind contains the power of reasoning.
- Since man is free to choose, he is responsible for his actions.
- “Free will” has been discussed by philosophers since ancient times.

*Assignment:*

Ask the class to write a composition on one of the following topics:

- Dante’s concept of “free will.”
- What “free will” means to me.
- Some implications of “free will” in the Space Age.



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#### AUDIO - VISUAL MATERIALS

##### Recordings

The following recordings are available through foreign language record shops specializing in records giving great works of world literature in the original.

##### *La Divina Commedia*

Complete recording read by Giorgio Albertazzi, Tino Carraro, Antonio Crast, Carlo d'Angelo, Arnaldo Foà, Achille Millo, Romolo Valli.

##### *Inferno* (complete)

Read by Albertazzi, Carraro, Crast, d'Angelo, etc.

##### *Inferno* (extracts)

The following passages are recorded: Caronte - La bufera infernale e Francesca - Farinata e il padre di Guido Cavalcanti - Il gran veglio di Creta - Il volo di Dante - L'incontro con Niccolò III - I demoni e i barattieri - Ulisse per l'alto mare aperto - Il conte Ugolino.

*Inferno* (extracts)

Paolo Ferrari reads: Ingresso all'Inferno - Caronte - Minosse - Farinata - Il Conte Ugolino.

*Inferno* (extracts)

Paolo Ferrari reads: Paolo e Francesca - Ulisse - *Purgatorio*: Manfredi - Iacopo del Cassero - Buonconte da Montefeltro - Pia dei Tolomei - Incontro con Beatrice.

*Purgatorio* (complete)

Read by Albertazzi, Carraro, Crast, d'Angelo, etc.

*Purgatorio* (extracts)

Book edited by Ettore Mazzali, the following passages are recorded: La spiaggia e l'apparizione di Catone - L'incontro con Casella e con Manfredi - Bonconte e la Pia - La lacca fiorita e l'esercito gentile - La preghiera al padre nostro - La maledetta e sventurata fossa d'Arno - L'incontro con Forese Donati - Guido Guinizelli - Il congedo di Virgilio

La divina foresta spessa e viva - Beatrice guida a Dante.

*Paradiso* (complete)

Read by Albertazzi, Carraro, Crast, d'Angelo, etc.

*Paradiso* (extracts)

Accompanied by complete book, ed. E. Mazzali, the following passages are recorded: Il cielo della luna e Piccarda - Il trasmutar di Beatrice e l'apparizione di Giustiniano - La figura di san Francesco cavaliere di Dio - Fiorenza antica secondo Cacciaguida e il martirio di Cacciaguida - L'esilio di Dante nella profezia di Cacciaguida - L'aiuola che ci fa feroci - Beatrice sospesa e vaga - L'apparizione di Maria - Il lume in forma di rivera - Il movimento degli angeli - La preghiera di Bernardo alla vergine e l'ultima visione.

**Films**

*Proud Citadel.* The history and art of the Florentine Renaissance from the period of Dante and Giotto through the Golden Age of Art under the Medici to the collapse of the Republic of Florence in the siege of 1529-1530. All works of art were photographed from the originals in Italy. 1958. Pizzo Films, 80 Fairway Drive #6, Daly City, California. 14 minutes, sound and color. Purchase: \$120. Rent: \$10.

*Brief on Italy.* This film discusses Italy's great past, the nature of her people and their present way of life. It points out the importance of a respectful

attitude towards Italians to promote good relations. 1955. Department of the Air Force. Air Force Film Library, 8900 South Broadway, St. Louis, Missouri. 27 minutes, 16 mm. sound. Book well in advance. Pay return postage. *Variations on an Italian Theme*. This film in full color presents a different travel film about Italy. In addition to the usual visits to Florence, Rome, Venice and other well-known Italian cities, it goes on to visit little-known areas of Italy where traditions and customs from the Middle Ages live on. Association Films, Broad at Elm, Ridgefield, New Jersey. Book three weeks in advance. Send postage. Furnish three dates.

*The Renaissance—Its Beginnings in Italy*. A film dealing with the achievements of the Renaissance, a period of awakening and discovery of the ancient world, of scholarship, of art and science, and of the dignity of man. Encyclopedia Britannica Films. Junior High School level. 1954.

#### **Filmstrips**

*Dante Alighieri* (1952). 24 frames. Captions in color. \$4. Eye Gate House, Inc. 2716 41st Avenue, Long Island City 1, N. Y.



Appendix

DANTE AND BEATRICE

A Play with Music

86/87

## DANTE AND BEATRICE

This original one-act play, written and directed for the Dante Celebration at New Utrecht High School, Brooklyn, by Miss Josephine M. Pacini, teacher of Italian at the school, is appended here. It is hoped that other schools will use the play or be inspired to write similar ones of their own. Original music was composed by Mr. Joseph Rubel and Mr. Israel Silberman of the Music Department of New Utrecht High School.

### Cast of Characters

DANTE	LITTLE DANTE
VIRGIL	LITTLE BEATRICE
BEATRICE	FIGURE 1—HELL
BUONCONTE DA MONTEFELTRO	FIGURE 2—HELL
NARRATOR	SOUL IN PURGATORY
MEDIUM	SINNER IN PURGATORY
WRITER 1	SINGER IN PURGATORY
WRITER 2	FIGURE—PARADISE
WRITER 3	

### SCENE I

*(Background Music: Dante Symphony by Liszt. This should be played throughout the parts read by the NARRATOR in the entire play.)*

NARRATOR: This is the 700th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri, poet, philosopher, father of the Italian language. For the occasion, four eminent writers of today have met in a darkened room. An eerie light plays upon the crystal ball in the center of their table. A medium is with them. The medium is striving to contact the spirit of Dante Alighieri.

MEDIUM: Concentrate. Let us all concentrate on one thing only, the name of Dante, Dante Alighieri, Dante Alighieri of Florence.

DANTE'S SPIRIT: Why do you disturb me in my sweet, eternal rest? Why do you seek me? What is your purpose?

MEDIUM: Ah! We have contacted him! We have succeeded! Who will speak first? Tell him of your wish.

WRITER 1: We are four literary men. Each of us has written a best seller. Not all our best sellers combined, not all the best sellers of a century, with the exception of the Bible, the best seller of all time, could equal your *Divine Comedy*.

WRITER 2: Tell us your secret. Was it perhaps that you were born in Florence?

WRITER 3: So many great Florentines have been honored in our country

recently. A great and graceful new bridge, the longest span in the world, was opened within the past year in New York Harbor. It is called the Verrazano Bridge, for Giovanni Verrazano, a Florentine navigator.

WRITER 2: Do you know that Michelangelo's *Pieta* has left its age-old niche in the Vatican to inspire the people of all lands who are visiting the World's Fair? This immortal masterpiece is also the work of a Florentine genius.

WRITER 1: Is Florence, then the secret of your erudition and thought? Did Florence mother your immortal masterpiece, the same Florence that has inspired so many geniuses?

WRITER 3: Indeed, what IS your secret? We, too, want to live through our writings even as you have survived through yours.

DANTE: To tell you what you wish to know, I must take you back with me through time, to the days of my childhood, to the occasion when as a little boy I attended a certain festival. . .

*(Music begins again. Continue Dante Symphony)*

A festival which changed my entire life. . . . A festival which influenced all my writing.

WRITER 2: Was it there that you met Beatrice, perhaps?

DANTE: Beatrice. . . . Be-a-tri-ce. . . . I first felt that driving force when I was no more than a boy, nine years old. I can remember it still. . . .

*(A slide is flashed on the back curtain. The slide shows Il Ponte Vecchio in Florence. A little girl holding a bouquet of flowers is on one side of the picture, while young Dante admires her from the other. The curtain opens, and the slide is still seen, and a festival begins. Music is playing as Florentine boy sings the song, "Sul Lung' Arno.\*" Two guitars are played as girls and boys dressed in the costume of Tuscan peasants appear. Some dance, some clap their tambourines, some keep time to the music. Peasant dancers, three in a group, perform briefly. In a pantomime, Dante tries to get the attention of Beatrice, but she is busy with her flowers and friends. Her chaperone takes her away, and Dante is left, dejected.)*

*(Little Dante and little Beatrice appear on the stage. Music: Francesca da Rimini Overture by Tchaikowsky.)*

NARRATOR: Dante was going into the market-place at Florence one sunny spring day. As he crossed the Ponte Vecchio, he had a feeling of expectation, a sense that something was going to happen. Then he saw her, all clad in white with her dark hair shimmering in the sun and flowing down her back.

\*"Sul Lung' Arno." Capital Records T-10347.

He did not know at that time what it was he felt. He knew only that he reacted at the sight of her. Little Beatrice did not even notice the little boy. She was too busy greeting her little friends, or admiring her bouquet of pretty flowers. Soon her chaperone came forward, took little Beatrice by the hand and led her away. He stood watching her till she was out of sight. Somehow, from that day onward, little Beatrice was to be an inseparable part of his life. He never forgot every detail of that memorable day. . . .

*(Music becomes louder, then soft again. . . .)*

DANTE: Nine years later, when I saw her for the second time, I knew that the same feeling persisted. I knew I had a deep affection for Beatrice, but it was something very unusual. She had never spoken to me during her life. . . . The last time I had seen her was on the way to the market-place. Now, nine years later, she had grown into lovely womanhood. She still wore white. Her black hair glimmered. She and her companions were coming towards me. I wanted to speak to her alone, but could not. Little did I know as she departed from my sight that this would be the last time I would see her on earth.

*(After a pause)* I was so moved and inspired that I recorded my emotions in a poem dedicated to her. The words live on even now . . . *Tanto gentile. . . .*

WRITER 1: That was poignant, Dante. Such emotional impact!

WRITER 2: Only one thing puzzled me in that poem, however.

DANTE: Yes?

WRITER 2: What did you mean when you said you would encounter Beatrice in another life?

DANTE: My life in *The Divine Comedy*; my journey through hell, purgatory and heaven. Beatrice became my guide in the realm of light, leading me to the sight of God. Don't you remember?

## SCENE II

*(Medium and writers are off to one side in the dark. The setting here shows red draperies in the background with flames to simulate the fires of hell against the draperies. Over the portal there is an inscription, which Dante reads.)*

DANTE *(solemnly)*:

"Through me is the way into the doleful city; through me the way into the eternal pain; through me the way among the people lost.

"Justice moved my High Maker; Divine Power made me, Wisdom Supreme, and Primal Love.

"Before me were no things made, but eternal; and eternal I endure. Leave all hope, ye who enter here."

*(Dante passes through the portal. He encounters a shadowy figure).*

FIGURE: Welcome to this lovely place. You are fortunate to be here in such good company.

DANTE: Welcome? . . . lovely place? . . . fortunate? How do you speak so foolishly? You cannot convince me to remain for all eternity in this place of never-ending suffering.

FIGURE: You will remain here; then you will see how lovely. Ha! Ha!

DANTE *(trying to walk on, but blocked by another evil figure)*: Go, you evil spirit.

SECOND EVIL FIGURE: Welcome. Sit and stay awhile. When did you arrive? What did you do? Probably some trivial thing, not like me. I'm a good one. I've killed a few people, including my mother.

DANTE: No, I have not committed terrible aggressions like yours and I never will. Leave, you evil creatures, and hide your ugly faces in shame.

*(The two evil spirits noisily dance around Dante and try to lure him.)*

EVIL SPIRITS: Ha! Stay! Ha! You can't escape. You'll be forever in this black pit with us. Ha! Ha!

VIRGIL *(Enter Virgil)* Go, you seducers! He will not stay. He is not like you and destined to suffer forever.

*(Spirits disappear, running.)*

I am Virgil. I was summoned, because of your admiration for my work, to guide you safely through hell and purgatory.

DANTE: Welcome, noble Roman. I am Dante Alighieri, and I am on my way to Paradise. Who sent you to me?

VIRGIL: A fair and beautiful woman, Beatrice.

DANTE: Be-a-tri-ce.

VIRGIL: Come, let us leave this evil region. Let us shake off all the sin of this terrible place and ascend the mount of purification, into Purgatory.

### SCENE III

*Blue draperies hang across the back of the stage. Dry ice is smoking in the background. Stage is dark as Dante and Virgil enter from the left side of stage. A blue light shines on them and a group of five people who are kneeling together are gazing upward in prayer. Four are kneeling together, and one is apart. There are other groups on the stage. (Mournful music is heard.)*

*(Miserere from Verdi's Trovatore would be appropriate.)*



VIRGIL: Here are the souls of the violently slain, who repented and made their peace with God at the last moment before death. Let us pass along.

*(As they walk on, they pass the one person who is off by himself, praying. Dante recognizes him and puts his hand on the spirit's shoulder.)*

DANTE: Buonconte da Montefeltro!

BUONCONTE: Dante!

DANTE: Why was your body never found on earth? How did you make your way to Purgatory?

BUONCONTE: I was mortally wounded in battle on the banks of the Arno. Even though I had led a sinful life, I died imploring the Name of God!

DANTE: And that way, you were saved?

BUONCONTE: Yes. An angel came from God to claim my soul, and the devil, who wanted also to possess my soul for eternity, became so angry that he took his revenge on me by causing my body to be tossed into the river.

VIRGIL: Come, Dante, we must go on. Beatrice awaits.

*(As Dante and Virgil walk on, the light goes off the group of people they have just seen. The light falls now on the next group. They have their eyes bound, and are leaning on one another for support. One of the souls stops them.)*

DANTE: What have you done to deserve this punishment?

SOUL: During my life I was very envious of my neighbors. My eyes saw only material things. I wanted only material things. This distracted my thoughts from God. Now my eyes are in darkness to make up for those sins.

VIRGIL: We must go on, Dante. We are near our destination.

*(As Dante and Virgil proceed, they see sinners chained to the floor. In front of them are benches filled with food. The sinners struggle to eat the food but cannot reach it as they are chained. One sinner stops them.)*

SINNER: Do pray for us, o living man. Pray that our torment will be lessened. We were gluttonous in life. So here below we are being purged by thirst and hunger.

DANTE: Yes, I will pray for you.

*(The spotlight goes off all others and remains on Virgil and Dante.)*

VIRGIL: My trip with you has come to an end, Dante. Now you will enter heaven, where Beatrice will be your guide. She will reveal to you the secrets of the realm of the blessed.

*(As the stage is darkened, Virgil exits.)* A girl sings a song from Canto II verses 112-120 of *Purgatory*.

*Italian*

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona  
Comincio'elli allor si dolcemente  
Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona,  
Lo mio maestro, e io, a quella gente  
Ch'eran con lui, parevan si contenti  
Come a nessun toccasse altro la mente.  
Noi cravam tutti fissi e attenti  
A lesue note; ed ecco il veglio onesto  
Gridando: Che e cio', spiriti lenti?

SCENE IV

*(White draperies. Stage is dark. Dante enters.)*

DANTE: Why all the stillness and the darkness? Paradise is the final place, the place of bliss and joy. I hope I have not lost my way.

*(A figure dressed in white appears.)*

FIGURE: No. Dante, you are not lost. You are indeed in Paradise. But are you worthy to enter? Is this the right place for you? We who are here have only happiness. We must be sure that those who enter really deserve eternal peace and joy. Can you speak for yourself?

DANTE: I am not one to judge myself.

FIGURE: Is there someone to speak for you, then?

*(Beatrice's voice is heard from afar.)* BEATRICE: I can. I am Beatrice. Yes, he is worthy. All his life his concern has been for his fellow man, for mankind. He gave of himself to people, to his city, to the world. I pray you, let him enter.

*(Figure pulls aside, then disappears. Enter Beatrice, also robed in white.)*

DANTE: Ah, Beatrice, is this really you? Have I come at last to the end of my long and seemingly endless journey?

BEATRICE: *(still at the other end of stage.)* Have patience, Dante. Your infinite happiness is almost here.

*(Lights flash on and scene opens with a gay dance of many white-clad souls with Beatrice as the prima ballerina. Dante stares in amazement and wonder. Dante goes toward Beatrice. Gay music continues. Curtain closes.)*

# Dante AMOR

JOSEPH RUBEL  
ISRAEL SILBERMAN

Very slow with dignity

Piano

The piano introduction is written for a grand staff in B-flat major and 4/4 time. It begins with a whole rest in both staves. The right hand then plays a series of chords and eighth notes, while the left hand plays a simple bass line of half notes and quarter notes.

Voice

quietly

A- mor che ne la men- te mi ra- gio —

rit----

Piano

The vocal and piano section continues in B-flat major and 4/4 time. The voice part begins with a whole rest, then enters with the lyrics 'A- mor che ne la men- te mi ra- gio' on a melodic line of eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piece concludes with a 'rit----' (ritardando) marking.

*a tempo* *rit... a tempo*

ne Co-min-cio el-li al-lor si dol-ce-men-

*rit..*

te Che la dol-cez-za an-cor

*a tempo* *rit---*

den-tro mi suo — ma

*decresc---* *rit--*

*a tempo* *rit---* *a tempo* *pocho a poco cres....*

den-tro mi suo — ma, suo — ma Lo mi-o ma



es - tro, e i-o, e quel-la gen-te ch'e-ran con

lu-i, pa-re-van si con-ten-ti si-, si con-

tem - ti Co-me a- nes-sun--, nes -

poco a poco decresc.....

sun to- cas-se al- tro la men- te,

Co-me a nes-sun - to-cas-se al-tro la men-te

Co-me a - nes-sun - to-cas-se al-tro la men-te

*molto rit*

1

Sta come torre ferma, che non crolla  
gia' mai la cima per soffiar de' venti.

—Purgatorio, Canto V, 14-15

(Be as firm as a tower whose rooftop  
Never cedes to the blowing of the winds.)